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# Match Makers

**Let's try this again folks!**

**Narrators POV**

America's feet pounded on the cement as he ran down the sidewalk. The cool morning air bit sharply at his exposed skin as he moved quickly. His hand gripped his bag's strap tightly, trying to ensure that it didn't slip off as he ran. He huffed out breaths of air, all while muttering, "Shit, shit, shit, shit."

On any normal day, being late to school was something that didn't bother America. But last night his friend Germany sent him a text saying that he needed his help and to get to the school early. No way was he letting him down, despite the fact he overslept.

America spotted a figure by the gated entrance of the school, the yellow skin of their arms and hands, plus the red and black strips across the countries head, told him who it was. He allowed himself to slow down, changing his pace to a casual walk. No way he was going to lose his calm demeanor or his reputation for it. Pushing back his sunglasses, America gave a smug smile with a half-wave as a greeting to his friend.

"Mornin' Germany!"

Germany turned to face America. He smiled upon recognizing the country, greeting him the same, "Guten Morgen, America."

America noticed that Germany looked more dressed up than he usually did. His white dress shirt was ironed out and neatly tucked into his formal dress pants. To match his look, he had dress shoes and a black tie. He was fancied up compared to himself, only wearing a black NATO shirt, ripped jeans, and white vans.

"Ger-man, " America leaned against the gate and crossed his arms, "you didn't have to get all dressed up for me~. Your cute enough as

it is."

Germany rolled his eyed and playfully shoved America. "Schut up, vu know I'm tryink to himbress Boland."

America nodded with his usual stupid smile, and the two walked into the gates of the school. Germany's accent was funny to hear, according to America. It made him pronounce words in English weird. Either way, he was still understood.

Other countries walked past the two, all talking amongst themselves. Everyone tended to break off into their own groups during the school day, so this was some countries chance to talk to certain countries before school started. Like it was for Germany and America, who had few classes together.

"I know, I know. When are you going to ask him out, you've been making goo-goo eyes at him forever!"

"America, hucsh!" Germany quickly tried to cover the taller countries mouth, but ultimately failed. He nervously looked around them to make sure no one heard what his obnoxiously loud friend had said. Or, in his eyes, what he practically yelled to the world.

"Ahh come on, it's not like everyone doesn't know." He pushed Germany off of him and they continued to walk into the school. Most countries ignored their conversation, minding their own business. And he was right anyhow, in that if anyone overheard nothing would change. Everyone knew about Germany's crush by then. Almost everyone, that is.

"I'm surprised Poland doesn't know by now."

"What don't I know?"

Germany practically yelled when be heard that familiar voice and accent.

"Poland, wassup, man?" America raised his hand for a high five, which was his normal greeting. Poland, used to this as much as everyone else, high five America and politely repeated himself, then waited for someone to answer his question.

"Uhhh, v-v-vell, vell, vu zee, America vas just talkink apout, vell, how he sinks zat not a lot of countries know apout zee, um, zee, .. " Germany babbled on with a clear red hue across his cheeks. He looked up at America to save him from his embarrassing ramble and obviously failed attempt at trying to keep it cool.

"What mister nervous here, " America hit Germany's shoulder and rested his hand there, "means is; I'm not sure that everyone knows about South Korea's newest song yet."

Poland blinked and looked to Germany for confirmation. The German could only look down at the floor at this point, seeing how he believed that he just screwed up everything for the day. After all, he knew that their families don't have a good history. Why would he even have the slightest chance if Poland probably doesn't trust and/or like him?

"I don't believe I have. I'll have to ask him about it, then. Bye America." Poland waved at him then held out his hand to Germany. "I'll see you later in class? You're going to be my lab partner, I hope you don't mind."

Germany gulped and quickly shook his hand, loving to be able to touch him in some way. "Nien, nien, nien, i-i-i don't mind."

Poland smiled brightly at Germany and walked off towards his locker. America started laughing at how loudly Germany sighed in relief, and how badly he kept his cool.

"Geez man, you *are* bad at that." He teased as they started walking again. Germany nodded and quickly tightly grabbed onto America's arms and pleaded desperately, "zat's vat I vanted you to help me with! I can't talk to him vithout melting dovn like zat. Arh! Blease, can vu talk to him for me?"

"Yeah, yeah, don't worry Ger-man, I got your back." America patted the smaller countries head and he gave a sigh of relief in return. "Thanks, friend."

The rest of the day seemed to go by without anything interesting happening. Until 6th period. Class was normal, and in that case

boring for America. He tapped his desk impatiently while his eyes were trained on a certain spot in the front wall. He heard the teacher say something, but it went in one ear and out the other. His eyes shifted from the wall to around the room. Everyone was either paying attention or looked just as dead as him.

His head lifted slightly as he noticed that a desk close to him was empty. 'Russia sat there', he thought to himself. 'Where could he have gone this time?'

Suddenly the door burst open and everyone jumped at the suddenly interrupted silence and concentration. A wheelbarrow, to everyone's surprise, rolled in and was being pushed by Ukraine. Russia laid inside the wheelbarrow, looking like the most sleep-deprived country ever to exist. His hat was tilted to the side, the weird ear parts of the hat tied up on top, his shirt loose and exposing some of his shoulder. Dirt smears were across his face and near the bottom of his pants and shoes.

"Don't ask." Was all Ukraine said before dumping Russia onto the ground and leaving him there.

The entire class was silent, unsure of what to say or do. Russia silently stood up, brushed off the dirt, and straightened out his hat before walking over to his seat. America stared at him, confused, and honestly impressed. He can appreciate a dramatic entrance, and that was one of the funniest he has seen so far.

The teacher continued with the lesson, unsure of how to even react to that. America chuckled and shook his head, unsure of how to tell Russia that he was the best thing to happen to this class today.

"Yo, Russia, dude." He leaned back and whispered over to him. Russia turned his head slightly, almost not even noticeable. His dead-eye stared sent a chill through America and sent off the feeling that he needs to tread softly.

"Y-you-you, man, you are pretty fricken great. What was all that, anyways?"

Russia turned his head to face the front board again, slouching in

his seat and resting his cheek on his hand. He muttered something in Russian before saying, "Ukrrraine said no ask."

'Man I love it when he rolls his r's', was America's first thought after he spoke. But Russia's dry emotion and voice told him that he wouldn't get any other information out of him. So, America sat back in his seat as he had before and tried to think of all the different possibilities that could lead to an entrance like that.

After class ended, Russia waited for everyone to leave the room before he slowly trailed behind them. He didn't want to get caught up in his class's questions for why he arrived late the way he did. That America guy seemed really interested and kept asking questions during the class, and Russia didn't want to answer any of them.

"Aye, Russia!"

The larger country turned to face Poland just as he ran up to him. He looked as though he was running for a while, probably to catch up with Russia before he headed to his next class.

"Poland, nice to see you."

"Ca-can, can, can you help me with something?" He nervously asked, fumbling with his hands. Russia nodded and the two started walking in the same direction. None were in a rush, Poland didn't have a class, and Russia didn't care.

"You're good friends with Germany, right?"

Russia nodded again.

Poland's face went flustered as he stuttered out, "I-i-i-i dink, I dink dat maybe, I don't, dat maybe, I kinda maybe, I mean-"

Russia set his hand down on Poland's shoulder and immediately shut him up. He motioned with his hands for Poland to take a deep breath and exhale slowly. He did so and it helped calm his nerves down a little bit.

"Danks, but what I was trying to say is that i-i-i dink I kinda like

Germany."

Russia silently nodded. His own thoughts on same-sex relationships borderline homophobic, due to his father's upbringing. But recently, he's become more accepting with how much everyone had begun to acknowledge and support it. And he cares for his comrades, so his viewpoint had to change.

"Zink orrr know?" Russia stopped at his locker to grab some notebooks for his next few classes.

"I mean, I know, I guess. It's every time I see him now I get this weird feeling in my gut, and I feel excited whenever I can spend time with him. I purposely made him my lab partner just so I could be by him more!" Poland started to ramble, a nervous habit that Russia has noted that he and Germany both share. Although Poland seems to have more control over it half the time.

"Vould you like me to talk to him?" Russia offered, closing his locker and leading Poland to his next class. Countries rushed by as the bell rung, signaling the start of the next class.

"Could you?" Poland smiled, his eyes lighting up. Russia nodded, smiling at how excited his friend looked at his offer. Seeing the ones he loved happy was enough to make his day feel better.

"Of kourrrse, anything forrr you, komrrrade." Russia patted Poland's head, making him laugh in response. They said their goodbyes before Russia went into his class. He knew Germany was in his next class, but he also knew that he was close friends with America. And America loved to tell people any and everything since he loved to hear himself talk all the time. Maybe Russia could ask him a few questions, just in case Germany was too nervous to tell him anything. The only thing about that, though, is that he'd probably have to answer America's questions, too.

((**Boo! Look, another fanfic for me to write! Mix it all in with the others I have yet to finish! I wish I could say I was joking guys, I really do. But that's the first chapter, obviously, and I'll try to make updates every Tuesday or Wednesday. Hint the word try. Also, the cover was made by me. Until next time,**

**Comrades.**))

**Imma do those parenthesis things for like the original authors note things in case I have something else to say and I just don't feel like deleting them. And I like making fun of myself, like can you believe I updated every Tuesday? Ha ha, the disbelief now!**

**~ Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**Galaxy**

# Class Project

**America's POV**

"You arrre Gerrrmany's frrriend, too, da?"

I looked up from my messy notes to see the looming figure of Russia standing over me. A shiver went down my spine as our vast height differences suddenly made him seem a few extra feet taller. A shadow was cast across his face from his hat and his position in the room, making him seem like he is about to murder or kick my ass.

"Uhhh, yeah-yeah why?" I sat back and shook off my nervous feeling. Fricken scary ass motherfucker.

"Do you know how he feels about Poland?" Russia sat down in the desk across from me, even though someone else normally sat there.

"Oh geez man, have you been living under a rock or something?" I scoffed and felt most of my confidence return when he sat down and looked less intimidating. Plus the fact that he doesn't know one of the most obvious things ever.

"Niet, I don't pay attention to silly zings such as zis."

"Of course you don't." I flatly responded but quickly added, before he could interrupt me, "I'll tell you what I know if you answer my questions first."

Russia glared at me, a scowl twitching at the corner of his mouth. I gave him my favorite smug smile when I took this as a yes.

"Sooo, Russia~," I leaned towards him in my desk and flirtatiously asked, "Are you single?~"

His eyes widened a little, my question clearly catching him off guard. I held back a laugh and kept my suggesting expression as I

looked at him right in the eyes. I had to, just in case, he moved to punch me.

"Da. My turrrn, " Russia hurriedly said, looking away from me. I breathed out a sigh of relief when he didn't punch me. It's fun doing that to people, but it can come with un-fun consequences.

"Do you know how Gerrrmany feels about Poland?"

I nodded, then said, "if we are taking turns, I'd like to ask you something, too. What was with the whole wheelbarrow thing?"

"Ukrraine said niet ask. So don't."

"That's not an answer, buddy boy."

"EHEM!"

We both looked up in front of us and seen the teacher standing there, her foot tapping impatiently.

"America and Russia, since you both were unable to hear my directions, you now have to be partnered together."

"Wait, what?" I asked, realizing then and there that our entire class was grouped into pairs of two. We must've not heard everything that was going on.

"For your science project, the one I had discussed last class. You two didn't choose a partner, so now you're working together."

With that, she spun on her heels and went to the other groups.

Great, now I gotta work with this silent scary weirdo? I thought this one conversation would be our only one. And this project, this stupid long-ass project, I gotta seem him how many more times now?

"Shit." Russia voiced my thoughts.

"Ahh, don't say that I'm a joy to work with." I joked, playfully punching his arm. He didn't appreciate my sense of humor cause he punched me back, but not as light as I did.

I groaned and rubbed my arm and scowled at him. "What's your deal, dude? I'm just trying to keep the mood lightened, tryna be funny."

"You punched me, I punched you. I found zat funny, zank you." Russia made his own joke, one that I found no humor in.

"Whatever. You never answered my question."

"What arrre ve doing prrroject on?" He ignored what I said again and took my notebook off of my desk. He must've been trying to grab my notes, but he grabbed the wrong notebook. I quickly snatched my book back, startling him and myself.

"Wrong notebook," Was all I said as I kept a death grip on the book. My gaze was kept down, not that he could tell with my sunglasses, and I tried to act normal. But Russia was there, keeping his eyes on me for a few seconds longer than I'd like. Then he grabbed my actual notes and starting flipping through them.

I set my book down on my desk and relaxed a little. No one can ever open that book, no one. I only keep it with me just so I always know where it is at all times. I don't want to think about what would happen if someone saw those pages...

"What prrroject on?" Russia asked again, not bothering to acknowledge anything I just did. Thank God.

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"So now I'm stuck working with the fragger." I vented to Germany as I slammed my locker shut. He looked at me with head tilted slightly if not understanding why I was upset. That's when I remembered he was actually friends/ acquaintances with Russia. Their dads hated each other, so they never really got to talk much. Now they do, I had noticed, though.
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"I don't get it. Vy is zat zuch ein pad sing?"

"Well, your biased because you're friends with the dude." I lead the way down the hall to the exit. School was over with, thank the Lord, and everyone was heading home. "Besides, your not the one going over to his house."

"His houze is nice, zough." Germany tried to cheer me up. It didn't work, obviously, but the effort was comforting. "Und zee country can pe ein great guy, once vu get to know him."

"Oh yeah, he was asking about you and Poland earlier, too."

"Vait, vat? Vat did vu tell him, blease tell me vu didn't zay hanything to him!" He grabbed my shirt and held me up close to his face in a panic.

"Geez man, don't worry I didn't say nothun'." I pried him off of me, holding my hand over my heart. God, he fricken scared me.

Germany sighed in relief and nodded. "Blease, can vu not? He's friends vith Poland, I don't vant Ruzia telling him."

"Alright, alright, I won't." A thought came to mind. Russia was friends with Poland. I'm going to Russia's house. I can ask him about Poland. He could tell me. I can finally set these two idiots up, fuck yes!

"Uhh, America? Vu haffe zat smile akain."

"What smile?" I looked to him, raising an eyebrow. Germany looked at me nervously, like I had spoken my thoughts out loud and knew my entire plan now.

"Zee smile vu alvays make ven vu are apout to do zomething hincretibly sdubid."

"Well buddy, " I patted him on the back and he leaned forward a little bit from my small force. "Just trust me."

Germany pushed up his glasses. "Zat's vat I vas afraid vu vere koing to zay."

**((Eh, short and to the point I guess. Okay, just for the future, when a country is speaking in another language, should I include the translation in parenthesis or just leave you to plug it into Google translate?))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Dont Judge a Book By Its Cover

**Russia's POV**

Can't believe America actually suggested coming over. Can't believe I agreed to it. To be honest, it caught me off guard. My Dad hated him and his father, too. No way that idiot would want to come here.

I tried to look at my notes to see if I had anything useful in them but got frustrated at the half-written sheets. A few notes and highlighted packets, but that's about it. Nothing useful. I was never fully there in class to even learn what was being taught.

I heard my sister Belarus laughing from down the hall and heard another voice along with her's. That was New Zealand then. She had told me that he was going to come over to hang out with her. Dad would never let her anywhere near that kid, but since he's no longer here, I let her make friends with who she wants.

My eyes drifted from my spot at the kitchen table, to where my Dad used to sit. His chair was pushed in, having never been moved since he last touched it. He was a good father if you looked beyond some of his issues. He would drink, yes, but, contrary to popular belief, he never laid a hand on us. He loved us all and protected us with his life. And that's what got him killed.

A knock on the door startled me from my thoughts. I shook my head and whipped away the formations of tears from my eyes. That must be America at the door, and I'm not going to cry like a wimp in front of him.

"Hey Rus, hope you didn't forget about me." America stood in my front doorway with his hands on his hips and his chest lifted. Why he looked so confident and almost cocky was beyond me. It was just his entire personality.

"Как я могу, вы делаете это невозможно сделать." (How can I,

you make that impossible to do.)

"Huh?"

"Nothing, get in herrre." I stepped away from the doorway and walked back into the kitchen. America took a few minutes before he found me sitting in my normal spot at the table. He had taken his shoes off, courteous of him, and took the seat across from me.

Silence.

God, I hated silence. But that's all that there was. America was looking around for a little while then stared at his notes. I could tell that he wanted to say something but couldn't form the words. I took notice how often he opened his mouth, only to quickly close it. He looked nervous, a few droplets of sweat forming on his forehead.

"Sooooo...." He finally spoke up and laid the papers down flat in front of me. I looked at him and raised an eyebrow.

"What do you do here for fun?" America wiped his forehead and relaxed his shoulders a little more. Everyone was always on edge whenever they were around me. Only a few countries didn't act like he was now. Everyone thought I was scary, or dangerous. Half the time, I don't think it's me they see. I think they see my Dad.

"Why?" I asked.

"I dunno, cause this project leaves a lot of waiting time and I get bored easily." America stood up and started looking through the kitchen cupboards and drawers. With suspicious eyes I watched him move around the kitchen before I stood up. I put everything back the way it was before America touched it, then I grabbed the boy by his shirt and plopped him back down in his seat.

"Rrread. I kan't rrread English vell." I pointed to his notes and America picked them back up and started reading them out loud to me.

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It was dark by the time we decided on the topic of our experiment.
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America finally agreed to my suggestion; growing crystals.

"Oh, maybe for bonus points we could make rock candy and give them to everyone." America wrote down his idea in his notebook. I nodded along with him, unsure what rock candy was, and continued to make supper for my siblings. I tried to remember who was where, home, or at a friend's house. How my dad managed to keep track of us surprised me, but I have to be the one to do that now.

"What are you making?"

I looked over my shoulder and saw that America was right next to me. I jumped slightly but he didn't notice.

"Бефстроганов, " I replied. He looked at me confused so I said the translation, "Beef Strrroganoff."

"Oh. Can I try some?"

America looked really interested in what I was doing, actually genuinely interested. A small smile curled on my lips and I nodded.

"When I'm done if you rrreally vant to trrry."

He nodded happily and it surprisingly made me excited. I don't cook for anyone other than my family, and they are used to what I make. This country had never had it before, it was new to him. And I was excited to share it with him.

We put our school stuff away and America helped set the table. New Zealand walked in with Belarus on his shoulders, her laughing loudly. UK's kid always was around his brother Australia, I'm surprised he actually is here without him.

"Oh helloi Ameeruca, I didn't noi you wheeree heeree." New Zealand greeted America in a formal kind of voice. Unlike siblings to speak to each other like that, they must not be close.

"Мен Си Строганфсты ұнатамын, сіз Ресейді жасайсыз (I smell Beef Stroganoff, is that what you're making Russia?)" Kazakhstan popped his head into the entrance of the kitchen.

"Да, брат. Я почти закончил. Можете ли вы получить другие? (Yes, brother. I'm almost done. Can you get the others?)" I turn back to the food I was preparing and heard him hurry off. His shouts of food came from the upstairs.

"I understood none of that." America sat down next to New Zealand, in the same seat across from me.

"You geet useed to ut." His brother comforted.

When the food was ready I gave everyone their portions. We all sat close together since there was a few of our sibling missing. Some have been staying with friends since our dad died, and others were just out visiting.

Everyone talked about their day and I listened to them. Speaking in various languages, I could understand them all. We've been together for so long I can speak them as much as I could understand.

I noticed America kept looking at me strangely. Like I was something he thought he understood but now was questioning what he thought he knew. I always get that look, from any country to thought they got the gist of who I was. But normally, they don't stare this long.

"какие?" I asked.

"Hmm?" He blinked and focused back into reality.

"What?" I repeated in English.

"Oh, uhh, nothing. Just got lost in thought, that's all." He waved me off, keeping his vocals steady. "The food is actually really good, I didn't know you could cook."

I glanced at my father's chair, then back to America. "I had to learrrn."

He nodded and went silent. I noticed that his food was actually gone, the plate almost licked clean. A smile crept onto my lips when I realized he wasn't lying when he said he liked my cooking.

After we were done eating, it was Armenia's turn to do the dishes leaving me free from that. But it also left me free for America to bother.

"Hey, why do you always seem so cold when you are, like, this huge family man, dude?" He pestered me as I walked up the steps to the bedroom area. "Why not treat others like that, too?"

"Боже, почему ты не оставишь меня в покое? (God, why won't you leave me alone?)" My eye twitched at his ever persisting presence.

"Dude, I still don't speak Russian."

I gave out a long sigh and spun around to face him. "I like it when kountrrries leave me alone, most arrre annoying."

"I take that as you calling me annoying, which I take that as a compliment." America gave me a smirk and leaned against the wall of the stairway. I raised a brow at his response but didn't put it past him to say it.

"Take it how you vant." I walked to my room, aware that America was following me. I stopped him right outside my door and asked him, "what arrre you doing, zhinking you arrre koming in my rrroom?"

"I was going to tell you, it got late really fast and I hope you wouldn't mind if I crashed here for tonight?" He fumbled with his thumbs and seemed embarrassed to even ask that. I looked to my room and thought about all my stuff that was laid out everywhere. I can't let him see all that, so he can't stay in my room.

"I'll get blanket, you sleep on kouch." I offered but before I could move, he interjected by saying, "actually, my brother is sleeping on the couch. You got a spare bed?"

I looked at the other empty bedrooms and thought about putting him in there. But, I'd never disrespect my siblings like that. America seems like the snooping type, and I don't want him ruffling around their stuff.

"черт побери (Goddammit.)" I muttered to myself and rubbed my forehead. "Let me put some stuff avay, you sleep in my rrroom."

America nodded and waited outside my room when I quickly went in and shut the door so he wouldn't see inside. I looked over to my dresser and shoved some clothes back inside thier drawers, then proceeded to put away some notebooks and other things. Doubt he could read Russian, but I wanted to be safe. After a few seconds of shoving things into hidden spots, I looked over at my shelf. On it, almost in plain sight now, was that small blade of metal.

A razor.

I rubbed my bandaged wrists when I stared at it. Clean bandages where by it along with my half empty bottle of vodka. I quickly grabbed all that, shoved it in an empty shoebox, and stuffed it under my bed. When that razor was out of my sight, I breathed out deeply.

I hated myself for it so much.

"So, we sharing a bed?~" America, being the dumb flirt he is, was leaning against the doorway. His arm was extended over his head, his hip stuck out and his hand placed on it. I couldn't see his eyes, but I knew they were filed with cockiness.

"I sleep on floorrr. You sleep on bed." I told him, pointing to the bed and floor. One of my pillows was on the floor along with a spare blanket, my resting place for the night.

"No, no, man I can't do that." America walked in and shoved me gently towards my own bed. "I'm not going to take your bed, I'll crash it on the floor."

"It how I show hospitality. Sleep." I demand whilst pointing at the mattress. America stood pouting in front of me, his arms cross and trying to appear taller than he really was.

"No. You sleep on your bed."

Frustrates, and tired, I dropped my shoulders and sighed dramatically. With little warning, I picked up America and walked

him over to the side of the bed. He yelped in surprise and latched onto me, wrapping his arms around my neck.

I tried to toss him onto the bed, but the jerk took me down with him. I landed on top of him and groaned at his weaker appearance hiding a strength I didn't think he had. Trying to get up, I saw that America was looking up at me, his hands around the back of my neck, and a surprised look on his face.

"Rawr~." America purred with a teeth filled smirk. He was enjoying this I could tell. So, I narrowed my eyes and felt my cheeks grow warm from the embarrassment of our position.

"Ты тупой американец (You stupid American.)" I growled trying to move, but he kept me where I was for a second longer.

"From this angle, Russian sounds pretty hot."

"Shut up and let me go." I tore myself free from his grasp and cleared my throat. My cheeks were still buzzing from embarrassment and shame, so I quickly looked away, and stiffly walked to where I made my sleeping spot on the floor.

Since I had kept my eyes glued to the floor, I didn't see America roll across my bed. He landed on the ground, and on the blanket with a thud. He muffled a groan of pain.

"Didn't think that through." He complained to himself, rubbing his backside. Then he laid down on the ground and curled up under the blanket. "I sleep here, you sleep on the bed."

Seeing how persistent he was, I decided to stop fighting. He wanted to sleep on the hard floor, go ahead. I can't say I didn't try.

I look off my shirt and jeans then got into bed. My bedside light was on, so I clicked it off. I'll ask America about Germany tomorrow. I had too much of his entire existence for today.

"Nighty night, Russki." America cood in the darkness.

I grunted as a response before mumbling, "Shut up and sleep."

# America Fanboys

**Narrators POV**

"Did you find out anything?" Poland questioned Russia almost as soon as he had spotted the taller country. Russia nodded silently and recalled that mornings events.

It was weird having a stranger basically stay the night at your house. In your room. And then wake up with him cuddling your arm. Russia had woken first, so he pushed America off the bed and woke him up like that. Suffice to say, he wasn't in the talking mood after that.

"I found out zat Amerrrica kan be a huge prrrick, morrre zan he alrrready is."

"No, not about him. About Germany." Poland whispered that last part so no one would overhear him. He didn't want some nosy country spreading stories. Germany might find out, and what if he didn't reciprocate those feelings? Their families have a long history of feuds, what if this starts another one? Between him and Germany. That would just kill him.

"Niet, I'm sorrrry, comrrrade. I kan talk to Gerrrmany today, so I kan avoid Amerrrica." Russia stopped outside his first-period class. He didn't drink away his problems last night, so today he was able to be awake in time for the beginning of school.

"Germany isn't here today, I dought you knew dat." Poland shook his head. "He sent out a mass text to his friends dat he wouldn't be able to come in today."

Russia tilted his head, obviously never had received the said message. "My phone is brrroken again. Drrropped it zis morrrning, " he lied. He had thrown it in frustration, almost shattering against the wall. But he'd never tell Poland why he did that.

"So please just talk to America, one more time?" Poland interlaced his fingers together and made the motions of begging. Russia looked away, easily having a soft spot for the smaller countries he called his comrades.

"Fine. I'll ask him."

Meanwhile, America was rubbing his arm still from when Russia shoved him off the bed. In his moment of pain and panic, he had momentarily forgotten where he was. Seeing an angry Russian sure didn't help his situation.

America changed into the extra clothes he kept in his locker. It was a spare pair of jeans and the shirt Canada got for him. It was a maroon color with the words 'Say Hey If You're Gay' printed in white. Canada got it for him as a joke/coming out present a while ago, even though he was technically bisexual. He loved it anyway, showing off his shoulders, and his homosexuality.

He looked in the bathroom mirror while holding his clothes from yesterday in his arm. The same arm he hit the ground hard on. It was somewhat better than a sore back, which he now doesn't have. He had woken up in the middle of the night with his back hurting, so he got into bed with Russia. Figured it was fine if he stayed as far away as he could and just explain himself in the morning. But nooooo.

He couldn't wait to tell Russia off when he saw him. Oh, if he thought that America was bad yesterday, he can show that Russian what bad actually is.

Or so he thought.

Russia saw America approaching him as he was on his way to class. His stance straight and he was moving briskly. He obviously was angry with him, no doubt for what happened this morning. But that didn't matter anymore to him.

"Listen here," America started, stomping his foot and pointing a

finger towards Russia accusingly. "What you did you big-"

"Poland likes Gerrrmany," Russia spoke like he was reading a grocery list.

America stopped immediately what he was saying and his arm dropped down. "W-w-what, what, wait, what did you just say?"

"Poland likes Gerrrmany."

America gasped loudly, covering his mouth with his hands. Russia leaned back, preparing for a big loud outburst.

"OH MY GOD!" He shouted while jumping into the air. He then proceeded to fanboy over this revaluation while everyone in the hallway stopped to stare. "Yes, yes, yes, yes, oh my God yes! Holy shit, yes!"

"Aye, America lad, calm yisser arse down paddy!" Ireland ran up to America and held his shoulders down to keep him in place. "What's 'eadin' on?"

"It's happening!" America was practically vibrating from how excited he was. He had been secretly plotting ways to get those two to hook up forever, and now it was all paying off. Even though he was a little disappointed that now he couldn't have his new ideas play out.

"Russia, you big asshole why didn't you tell me sooner!?" America tore himself free from Ireland's grasp and lunged to give Russia a hug. Ireland almost fell to the ground but Scotland caught him.

Russia was trying to avoid the other countries' gaze, and their willingness to avoid looking at him helped. Until America quickly attacked him with a tight hug. He wrapped his arms around his waist and nuzzled his face into his chest. Russia tensed up, unsure of how to react. By now most of the countries continued on their way to class, losing interest in what America was doing.

To at least acknowledge America, Russia stiffly patted his head.

"Waw Russia, ye swatch as if yoo've ne'er gotten a hug afair. (Wow Russia, you look as if you've never gotten a hug before.)" Scotland joked about his way of recuperating America's hug.

"You have had a hug before, haven't you?" America looked up at Russia, loosening his hold on him. He suddenly became more concerned about the possibility that he had never been graced with such a simple form of appreciation. But he sighed in relief when Russia stiffly nodded his response.

"Zey arrren't zis long, zough," Russia complained, trying to wiggle his way out of America's grasp.

"I can't help that I like hugging cute things~." America teased, fluttering his eyelashes majestically. Scotland and Ireland laughed at his joke, and at the face Russia made. For his sake, America let him go.

"Cannie America, ye micht make heem bent. (Careful America, you might make him gay.)" Scotland snickered as he and Ireland walked off. He didn't mean anything by it, just wanted to add to the joke.

Russia narrowed his eyes and was about to object to what the other country had said, but America stopped him. "Don't worry, " he patted Russia's arm, "he's just joking around. No need to get too worked up."

"Whatever. So how does Gerrrmany feel about Poland?" They started to walk to the class they originally were supposed to be in.

"Oh, Ger-man loves him! He's had a crush on the guy for, like, ever!" America immediately told. He wouldn't give other countries secrets away so easily, but this was Russia, a sort of friend to Germany. And Russia is great friends with Poland, trying to make up for what happened in the past, he guessed.

"Good. I'll tell Poland." Russia wanted to end the conversation there, but a smack on the back of his head caught him off guard.

"черт возьми, ты только что ударил меня!? (The hell, did you just hit me!?)" Russia exclaimed as he pushed his hat back out of his eyes.

"I don't know what you said, but if it was 'What was that for?', then it was because you can't just tell Poland!" America tapped his foot angrily and crossed his arms. He decided against telling him that he almost had to jump in order to even hit the back of his head.

"Vy not?"

"Because that's not at all romantic." America rolled his eyes and spoke in a tone that meant 'obviously'. "We have to set them up in a romantic setting, like a secret date. I've had a bunch of ideas for things like this."

"Vu really do haffe ein blotding face. (You really do have a plotting face)" Russia noted, studying how America smiled and furrowed his eyebrows. His shoulders were raised slightly, and he was rubbing his hands evilly.

"Cause I got a good idea. And you're gonna help me."

**((Holy crap Scotland, your accent is so thick I have to include a translation for people who can't understand it! I'll do that when I feel as if what a charter says is unreadable in their accent, in case people don't know what they are saying.))**

**The Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Gerpol

**Narrator's POV**

Germany was nervous. Extremely nervous. He's always been like that ever since he was freed from his Dad's propaganda filled reign. Always on edge, waiting for something bad to happen. Even though he knew he was safe, so he shouldn't feel like there was danger everywhere. And yet, he did.

Germany let out a long sigh and looked at his watch. America was ten minutes late.

"Komm schon, wo bist du? (Come on, where are you?)" He tapped his foot on the ground below him. He had been out sick for two days, and now that he was starting to feel better, America had suggested hanging out. So he decided why not. His home had started to feel haunted.

So there he sat. Alone. On a park bench. And it was starting to get late.

Germany laid down to try and feel a little more comfortable, trusting that America would show up. He's never failed him before, why would he now?

His phone dinged, telling him he got a new message. Germany quickly sat up to check it.

*Ame- Yo, sorry dude I can't make it. My Dad has me stuck at home right now.*

*Germany sighed and quickly type out a response.*

*Ger- You never let your dad stop you before. Why the sudden change?*

*Ame- My Mom told me to listen.*

Germany nodded, knowing that he listens to France more than he did his father.

*Ame- Sorry man*

*Ger- It's okay. I needed to get outside anyway, feels better.*

With that, he shut off his phone and put it in his pocket. He took a minute to sit and stare at the sky, watching the clouds slowly crawl across the sky. The blue had now started to darken, making way for the night.

Unbeknownst to either of them, Poland was sitting at the same park. He was waiting for Russia since he had gotten a message from him saying to meet him here.

His phone beeped and he checked the message.

*Ruski- I'm sorry comrade, but I can't make it.*

*Pol- Is everything okay?*

*Ruski- Yes, Armenia is having me do something to make up for buying me a new phone. Sorry.*

*Pol- It's okay. What did you want to tell me?*

A few minutes passed and Russia didn't answer. Poland sighed and stood up. The sun was starting to set, he should probably get home. Nothing keeping him there.

He stood and started walking towards the front gate. A slightly cool breeze blew and he shivered. His hands rubbed his bare arms as he regretted not bringing a sweater. It was fall, he should have assumed he should've brung one.

Germany pulled out his phone to check the time as he walked towards the gate. He looked to the side, glancing around cautiously and he froze. Out of instinct he jumped behind a tree and held his

chest tightly with his hands.

Poland was right on the path next to his!

"Oh Gott, nein! (Oh God no!)" He fumbled with his phone, hurriedly trying to get it out. What was Poland doing here, at the same time he was!? He needed to text America.

*Ger- America! Poland is here.*

*Ame- So go talk to him.*

*Ger- I can't do that, not without you to stop me from rambling and stuttering!*

Germany looked behind the tree and seen he was still there. He had stopped walking and was looking down at his phone. His heart did a summersault and he quickly went behind the tree again. Oh God, he hoped he wasn't seen.

*Ame- you can do it!*

*Ger- you have more confidence in me then i do myself.*

Germany silently crept out from behind the tree and started walking back down the path he was just on. A wall of bushes separated the two paths so Germany wouldn't be seen.

His phone dinged and he checked the message. No doubt from America, telling him he should believe in himself more.

*Ame- You better turn around and go back to him!*

*Germany froze. How did he know he started walking away?*

*Ger- Wait, what do you mean?*

*Ame- I mean, turn back around and start walking back at a medium pace so you bump into Poland. Play it off as a coincidence.*

Germany sighed and put his phone in his pocket. America had purposely set this up, he knew it. And somehow had eyes on him, that creepy spy. But the idea of that happening, 'running' into Poland is such a perfect scenario. He had to do it.

Poland wasn't looking when he felt someone bump into him. He tripped over his feet and started falling to the ground. Someone grabbed his hand and his waist before he could hit the cement.

"Oh Gott, Boland are vu okay?"

Poland looked up and seen it was Germany. He looked nervous, clenching his teeth and holding him with a shaky grasp.

He nodded and allowed himself to be stood up. But he didn't let go of Germany's hand.

"Uhh, B-Bole?" Germany asked, staring at their interlocked fingers. His cheeks grew warm and he tried hard to swallow the lump in his throat. Poland smiled and let their hands fall together, still holding onto one another.

"I don't want to let go." He gave his hand a small squeeze before leading the blushing German out of the park.

America poked his head out of the bush he was hiding in and watched the two walk away. He smiled at their interlocked hands and held back his laugh of excitement.

"Amerrrica, get down. Zey'll see you." Russia grabbed his shoulder and pushed him down onto the ground. He fell down with a thud and a few leaves flying away from him.

"Oi, they weren't that close." He shoved Russia away as he stood up again. Poland and Germany walked out of the gates just in time for a horse-drawn carriage to pull up in front of them. France was behind the reins and made a motion with her hands for them to hop in. The two boys stood where they were and had a conversation mute to America and Russia. Then they hopped in and France drove them away.

"Yes!" America jumped out of the bush, Russia allowing him. "Part one of plan Gerpol is activated. Now everything should fall into place over the course of this night."

Russia shoved America into another bush and started to walk off. America spat the leaves out of his mouth and marched over to the country.

"What was that for?"

"You acting veirrrd. So I stopped you."

America frowned but didn't protest. He wanted to know if Germany was doing okay since the poor boy has anxiety and he just threw him into a situation he was fearful of. Sending him one text wouldn't hurt.

*Cool dude- Hey, you doing good man? I saw Poland holding your hand~*

*Ger-man- I'm great actually. Poland has his head on my shoulder right now.*

*Cool dude- Haha, I told you I was good. Why even doubt me?*

*Ger-man- Hey, it's Poland. I stole Germany's phone. He can't talk right now, we are on a date.*

America smiled wildly and shoved his phone screen into Russia's face. "Dude, dude, dude, dude, look, look, look, look! He said date, yes they are considering themselves on a date!"

Russia took his phone and read the short conversation. "Hmm." He smiled, thinking of how happy Poland must be. He knew he seemed like he didn't care about this right now, but he was glad America had the ideas for setting the two up. He could never do that, he doesn't know how to. He'd never tell America, but he was happy to have his help on this.

*Cool dude- Pole, its Russia. I only have one thing to say.*

*Ger-man-?*

*Cool dude- Get some!!*

America tugged on Russia's arm for him to lower the screen. "I can't see, what did you tell them?"

He clicked off the phone and handed it back to the smaller country. "Nothing. Just told zem to have fun."

**((One day later I upload a new chapter. Man, I'm really bad at schedules.))**

**Yes, I am.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Trouble Behind the Glasses

**Narrator's POV**

"Why won't he tell me!?" America threw his hands up in the air in frustration. His brother Canada laughed at him and his dramatic display of anger.

"Because it's 'none of my business', that's his answer!" He continued with his rant as the two walked to meet up with Russia and one of his sisters at the park. The dude had a big family.

"Well, you do tend to be over-involved in things like that." Canada tries to explain that to his brother, but like usual it goes in one ear and out the other.

"I was the one who got their date all set up, and they won't even tell me what happened during it!"

Canada rolled his eyes, now coming to terms with the fact that he's not going to get through that big head of his. He loves his brother unconditionally though. Even when he and their dad had a falling out, Canada was there to help his brother. He was still there after America lashed out at him. That was such a long time ago, but he can still feel that America feels guilty about it. Making up for it in what he can, even though Canada has forgiven him.

"Is the little kountry winnyng again?"

America was cut off from his ranting when Russia's voice spoke over him. A few feet in front of them stood the taller figure and a smaller country hiding behind him. She had a big sweater on half yellow and half a light blue. A multicolored flower crown was gently rested on her head. How she got flowers when it was fall surprised them, but they didn't ask.

"Constantly." Canada went along with Russia's teasing and patted

America's head. He swatted his hand away and gave his brother a look.

"Did Poland or Germany tell you anything about last night?" America asked Russia, deciding against arguing with them about that comment. It would bring nothing but more teasing. And he doesn't have the attention span for that right now.

"You kan ask him yourrrself. Poland is going to be herrre in few minutes. He vant to talk to me about something." Russia looked at his phone to check the time. His unnamed sister tapped his shoulder and motioned for Russia to lean down. She whispered to him something in another language and pointed to Canada. Russia response back in his language, leaving the other two confused.

"I'm sorry, eh, but what did you guys say?" Canada asked, eyeing the girl. She looked familiar, Ukraine he believed her name was.

"My sister just vanted to know who you werrre," Russia explained in a short summary.

"Well, eh, I'm Canada. It's nice to meet you." He held out a hand to shake and the girl looked him up and down. Her eyes seem to scan his entire being, judging his stance, and looking into his soul.

"Ukraine." She accepted his handshake and greeted him with a warm smile. The switch from a predator to innocent startled him, but he was happy with the conclusion.

"When is Poland getting here, I wanna know what happened so baaaad." America started complaining again, looking around them to try and spot the familiar polish country. No luck. There were a few countries around, but not any of the two he was looking for.

"Oh kut it out. Whinnying is not going to make him hurrrry." Russia said one of his usual monotone comments with zero expression. Dude always looks like a robot when he's in public, America noted. But that first night at his house, he lost that hard outer shell and looked alive. Like, he had emotions, he could smile, he could joke and be really sincere. Why he wasn't like that with everyone

confused him.

"Oh hush up, you know very well I'm just trying to be annoying." America playfully punched Russia, as he's been doing a lot lately. It's his way of trying to condition him into knowing that if America jokingly pushes, or punches him in the future, its not an invitation to really hurt him back. It's just a joke. Scary ass Russian.

"But seriously, ga:weh neh haji:nöh?" (where is the man?)." America suddenly covered his mouth, a loud audible slap stopping the casual atmosphere. No one could see, but his eyes went wide when he realized what he had spoken in.

"What the hell?" Russia looked at him weirdly. His English may not be perfect, but he knew very well what he said wasn't it.

America opened his mouth to try and talk down what just happened, but instead, he started to violently cough. Canada noticed, tearing himself away from his and Ukraine's conversation. Russia was looking at America cautiously, and nervously. He had his hand over his throat and looked to Canada.

"Dasgyenöwö's! (Help me!)" He desperately tried to speak his own language, to try and beg for Canada to help him. But he couldn't. Not anymore.

Canada didn't understand what America had said, but it didn't matter. He had heard and seen enough.

It was happening again.

America started to shake, his head feeling light, and his heart picking up speed. His throat burned with the power of thousands of words unspoken, and his tearing at his throat to get it all out. But he couldn't, not here. Not in front of all these countries.

"Amerrrica, what is wrrrong, arrre you okay?" Russia grabbed him by his shoulders and studied his face. He could tell that whatever was wrong was excruciatingly painful, with only deep rough coughs and gasp for air being the only sounds that escaped him.

America tried to respond again but coughed into his hand. He felt a hot poker stab his neck for a few seconds before it faded away to a less burning hot stab. America looked down at his hand and noticed a black liquid was now splattered on it, a small pool forming in his palm. He could feel the same liquid slowly falling down his lip. Russia saw all of that and audibly gasped.

"I got to get him home, we are so sorry to leave you like this. Tell us what Poland said, please. I'm so sorry again." Canada quickly shook Ukraine's hand as a goodbye, grabbed his brother, yanking him from Russia's grasp. America had tears running down his cheeks as he held his hand over his mouth to keep any more words or black liquid from coming out.

Russia tried to grab America again but Canada was already dragging him behind him as he ran. He looked to Ukraine before they both silently agreed to follow them. So they ran to try and catch up.

Canada called their mom, and she immediately answered. "Bonjour, Canada sweetee"

"Mom! It's America, he's having another one of his episodes."

"Oh lá lá, non, (oh dear, no) wergre argre you two!?"

"The park. Back entrance." Canada looked down at his brother and seen he was trying to keep up the best he could. America just wanted to fall down and scream, but he wanted to get up and fight everything, or run into the woods and live there. So many conflicting things all at once, dancing around with the pain he felt throughout his body. In his mind, in his throat, in his chest, in his heart.

"Saja'dasno:wä:t! (Get a move on!)" America shouted at Canada through gritted teeth, pain, and fear seeping into his voice. He couldn't even speak English anymore, oh God he really needed to get him home.

France, ignoring all road safety rules, sped her way down the streets and screeched to halt in front of the smaller gate entrance/exit. She spotted Canada and America running towards her, so she quickly got out and opened the side door of the car for them.

Russia and Ukraine were behind them, enough for them to still see the other two, but too far to reach them in time. The two brothers had jumped into the car and had driven away by the time Russia and Ukraine had skidded to a stop by the side of the road. They both panted, tired, and wishing they had run faster.

"Vhat was that?" Ukraine asked, standing up and holding her arms above her head.

"I don't know. But something isn't rrright vith him." Russia watched the car turn out of sight and stayed there until the sound of the loud engine disappeared. That black substance that he coughed out. Him speaking in an unfamiliar language, one he had never heard of. His fear and pain as he clawed at his own throat.

What was all that?

When they arrived home, America ran right inside and past everyone who waited at the door nervously. He ran right up to his room and quickly shut and locked his door. He slammed the windows shut and pushed the curtains in front of them.

Then he screamed. A loud, long, drawn-out, grueling, agonizingly painful screech. It burned his throat to do, but he couldn't stop himself. He fell to his knees, clutching his head as the pounding of drums beat on the inside of his head.

His scream turned into a watery choke as he held his mouth shut. His stomach churned as he could feel more of that black liquid start to build up in his throat.

In a panic, he ran into his private bathroom and collapsed onto the toilet. He threw up, retching and shutting his eyes tight from the pain. His hands clutched the sides of the seat, shaking and hurting from the amount of force he was using.

When all was said and done, America sat by the sink hugging his knees to his chest and crying softly into his legs. His sunglasses were discarded to the side, the first time in a while he had taken them off without having to go to bed.

A knock tapped on his bathroom door, but he didn't move to look up. He knew he didn't close his bathroom door, so whoever was at the door could see him.

"Amergreeca, sweetee?" France softly spoke, stepping lightly to her son. He didn't move or respond. She glanced around the bathroom, glad to see that he didn't break his mirror again. But black splotches of the strange liquid he always coughed up during this were in the sink and still in the toilet.

"Oh, mon pauvre bébé. (Oh, my poor baby.)" She fell to her knees and grabbed him into a tight hug. America sobbed into her shoulder, wrapping his arms tightly around her and holding her tightly. She rubbed his back and shushed him, trying her best to comfort him.

Canada stood in the doorway, looking at the two. He played with the key to America's room between his fingers. He had given it to him before, just so he can check up on him when something like this happens. It was supposed to be a just in case thing.

Canada cleaned up America's bathroom as France laid the country down on his bed. America stopped speaking and turned on his side so his back was facing them. France frowned, but knew not to take it personally. He was hurting and didn't want them to see him like that.

"Zhust rgrest sweetee. You can come down wen you are reh-dee." She gave him a kiss on the cheek and stood to leave.

"I cleaned your bathroom, for you Ame." Canada stood by the side of the bed looking down at him curled up in the fetal position. He hugged him quickly before turning to leave with their mom.

"See you in a bit, eh?"

America heard the door click shut and he waited a few minutes before sitting up. He looked to his phone, the light blinking of new messages. He decided to ignore those for now, fearing that maybe one was from Russia. Asking him what all of that was.

He sighed and stood on his feet. His legs were weak and he almost fell down, but he caught himself on his nightstand. He tried to look for his sunglasses but he didn't see them. They must still be in his bathroom.

They where. Sitting on the floor.

He picked them up and went to wash them off in the sink. America rubbed his thumb over the rim of the glasses. He noticed they were cracked and chipped away at the edge. Must be from when he threw them. Annoyed, he threw them into the trash. That was his last extra pair, he had to be more careful with them.

Frustrated, he rubbed his face and looked down into the drain. He was avoiding looking at the mirror for one obvious reason. Without his shades, he knew what he'd see.

His eyes.

His dark black eyes.

**((Little America has a secret. And it's not a pretty one. A little theory based on a little thing I saw. It's actually the video I added. A little side note, but just shout out to that animator. They are really good and I love them.**

**Edit: Okay, someone in the comments told me that the original idea for the black eyes is from t._tazy on Instagram. Check them out, they are really cool. The idea I have for this fic, though, is kind of similar to theirs, just some differences. Thank you, and if your interested check t._tazy out. Their art is great, honestly. Like, I legit just checked them out to see what they offered and ended up scrolling through their entire page...**

**So yeah.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Fixed Kiss

[image]

**America's POV**

I could feel Russia staring me down. I had never responded to his text about what had happened. I was used to ignoring it afterward. Ignoring my families stares. Ignoring that pity look I got from my mom and dad.

And now, ignoring Russia.

"So, we have to identify five rock crystals and write about their formation and stuff." I read to him my jot notes I took from class. His lack of response made the metaphorical spotlight he had on me grow brighter.

It has been two days since what happened at the park. I'd rather forget it and move on, but it's not easy. Especially with Russia bugging me about it. Doesn't help that I'm over at his house again, working on our school project.

"So, I can start doing that and you can start getting our experiment part of our thing down, then." I closed my notebook, the usually quiet sound cutting through the air like a knife.

"Amerrrica, ansver my question."

"Russia, work on the experiment." I quickly shot back as I reached into my bag to grab out my laptop. Should be easy to find some stuff online, so I'm not too worried.

"Amerrrica-"

"Can we just leave it alone?!" I snapped.

His eyes widened when I shouted. My head lowered out of guilt. I didn't mean to do that, I just wanted to forget about it. Shove it down and ignore it even exists.

"Nyet. Zat seemed serrrious Amerrrica." Russia set both his hands down on the table with force to emphasize the word 'serious'.

"No, it really wasn't. I just had.... Um, something bad to eat that day. Nothing big."

"Bullshit."

His tone made me wince. No matter what I told him, he would know I would be lying. But I'm not telling him the truth, either, so he'd have to let it go.

"Tell me, and I'll tell you everrrything zat Poland and Gerrrmany told me."

Damn it.

"No, don't do that to me man. This is serious."

"Ahh, but I zought you said it vasn't serrrious." Russia crossed his arms and raised his head in pride of getting something out of me. I frowned and sighed in defeat. So I can't go down the route of 'it's nothing bad' anymore. Fake a personal problem? Or just try to lie again? And risk angering him more and being possibly hurt by him? No thanks, I chose life.

"Fine. It's just something that happens once in a while and I can't stop it, there, happy?" I crossed my arms and snapped at him. This time, no guilt from doing so.

"Vell, Poland and Gerrrmany had a grrreat time. But afterrrvarrrd, zey both did something zey rrregrrretted." Russia then stood and started on his hunt through the cupboards.

"That was really vague, what happened for real?" I watched him move around, gathering things in an organized formation. Something they regretted? What was it? Germany did have an expression that was kind of like guilt whenever he looked at Poland. But he was also wearing Germany's jacket when I had last seen him. So it couldn't have been that bad.

"The ansver you give equals the ansver I give." Russia flatly

explained, but I knew at this point he had a smug smile on his face. That jerk one-upping me when I'm the one that is supposed to do that.

"Fine. I'll just pester Germany some more about it, he'll break eventually." My voice dripped with anger as I stared at the back of his head. I opened my laptop and began to work on the project that we had a few weeks to do. Russia didn't ask any more questions, so I assume that meant he finally figured out that I wasn't going to say anything more.

My mind almost immediately went back to that day, however. When I came downstairs after about an hour or two of waiting it out, my mom and dad were waiting for me downstairs.

Mom gave me a hug and my Dad tried his best to comfort me, too. He would have given me a hug, but mom was already crushing me with hers so I was thankful he didn't.

"What can you tell us about this one, dear?" My mom had asked holding out her arms to look at me.

"I don't know, everything blends together now," I lied. I remember everything, the name of the language, the culture it's in, the type of society, traditions, everything. I can never shake the feeling of it afterward. But I can't say that, it'll only make them more worried.

"I can help you, son, if you can just tell us more about this." My Dad had tried to get me to open up again, but like all the other times before I shot him down.

He couldn't help me last time, why does he think that could change? His only idea was that it had something to do with oppression, but he didn't have the black eyes. No one else had them, only me. Germany's Dad didn't even have them! I'm the only one, why?!

I shook my head and focused on the present. The loading screen was long done, my background smiling at me. It was a picture of my family, one of the silly ones we take. Even Dad was making a funny face.

"You back?"

"JESUS ALMIGHTY!!" I jumped from my seat and fell onto the ground. I hit my back hard with my feet suspended in the air held up by my seat.

"Holy fuck!" Russia busted out laughing, holding his stomach. He was sitting in the seat next to me, without me ever realizing he had moved right there.

"Shut up!" I snapped and rubbed my back. It hurt like hell, man. I looked down to see if I landed on anything, cause it sure felt like it. I didn't but I noticed my sunglass were on the floor. Before Russia could notice, I snatched them and basically smacked them onto my face.

"You doze out, starrring at scrrreen. Ha ha, you jumped so high!" Russia finally broke from his laughter and strained to tell me that. He had tears in his eyes and was holding his stomach from how hard he laughed.

"I did not." I stood back up and brushed myself off. "I just didn't see you there."

"I kan tell." He poked more fun at me until I shooed him off. He went over and started the experiment part we needed while I found information on some crystals.

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"Later Ruski." I waved by to him as be did the same. It had gotten dark, and this time I had made sure I gave myself enough time to head home.

"Oorrr." I pulled out my phone and sent a text to my dad.

*Cool dude- Hey, I'm spending the night at Germany's.*

*Dad- Okay, give us more warning next time.*

*Cool dude- Will do.*
~~~~~~~~~~

I ran over to Germany's house, knowing that after one night of dealing with me he would tell me what happened.

"Bol- Oh, America! Vat are vu doing here?" Germany looked at me confused when he opened his front door to see me.

"Tell me everything, I swear to God!" I pished myself into his house and poked his chest. "Or I'll- wait, why are you all dressed up?"

Germany was wearing a dress shirt with a tie and dress pants. Normally he tries to dress professional, yes, but this was different. More fancy.

"Oh, I'm, I hinffited Boland here." He fixed his glasses and pointed to his kitchen. A faint glow came from there and that's when i took the time to evaluate my surroundings. His house was darkened, cleaned from what I could see, and soft music was playing.
"I'm guessing what happened wasn't really bad then?"

Germany shook his head. "Nien, ve zought it vould haffe peen funny if we didn't tell vu hanything about vat habened zince vu meddled vith our puziness."

"Okay, that's fair, but Russia said you both did something you regretted."

Germany nodded, and after a little convincing, he told me about what happened that night. Poland had stopped on that trial because he got a text from Russia explaining that Germany was there and that he and I were working together to hook them both up. Guy can't keep a secret.

After a while of a carriage ride and talking, they both got dropped off by my mom on a street corner and they walked to Poland's house. Germany had given Poland his jacket when he seen he was cold, and that lead up to a moment that Germany started getting flustered even talking about it.

"Focus, man." I reminded.

"Okay, okay, zorry. Chust I, " Germany sighed. "Ve vere houtzide his door, und I vas hadchusdibg (adjusting) zee collar of mein chacket

on him ven ve poth kind of looked at each other und sdared. I sdared into his eyes, und he vrabed his arms around mein vaist."

I leaned in knowing where this was leading up to. Come on, make it official-official, Ger-man.

"He leaned tovards me, und I had zee chance to kiss him right zen und zere. Put-"

"No! There are no buts, there should be no buts, what did you do?" I interrupted him and started to panic. Don't tell me he messed up.

"I banicked and hugged him hinstead."

Insert glass shattering effect.

"What, nooooo! Why did you do that!" I jumped out of my seat and started pacing around. I had so many emotions running through me, anger, dread, sadness, some excitement, just everything good and bad fighting inside my chest.

"I don't know vy, I vanted to zoo much, put I chust- I frose und did zat hinstead, Gott I'm zo sdubid (stupid)." Germany banged his head on the table. I looked at him with pity and was about to move to comfort him when I saw someone standing in the doorway.

It was Poland.

He put a finger over his mouth and told me to hush and I nodded. "Ger-man, if you could go back to that moment what would you do?"

"Vu know vat I vould do." His voice was muffled slightly from being buried between his arms and table.

"Then tell me."

Poland crept up behind Germany silently and I smiled. But when Germany lifted his head up, I focused on him and didn't look behind him.

"If I vasn't zo zacred, I vould'fe graped him py zat chacket collar,

bulled him cloze to me, und kissed him!" He leaned back and rubbed his face with his hand. Man, for being on edge half the time he is taking a really long time to realize someone else entered his house, walked up behind him and now is standing there.

"Like dis?" Poland finally spoke. Before Germany could react, Poland grabbed him by his jacket and pulled him in for a kiss.

I clamped my hand over my mouth, half not expecting that and half not wanting to shout out in excitement and ruin the moment for them.

Germany's eyes were wide for a moment before he slowly sank into the kiss and wrapped his arm around Poland's waist.

Before they broke apart, I quickly grabbed my phone and took a picture. The sound effect made them both look at me and I smiled brightly.

"Don't worry, I'm only going to send it to Russia, you two, my mom, and maybe some others."

Then I took off running, up the stairs and into the guest room I usually sleep in. Germany yelled something after me but was quickly cut off by what I'm just going to assume was another kiss from Poland.

I chuckled evilly and created a group chat to send the picture to. My mom, obviously I was going to do separately. She has been helping me come up with plans to get Germany and Poland together and volunteered to give them a ride in her 'Coach of Love'.

*Cool dude- Hey everyone!*

*[image]*

*Anime Chick (Japan)- Oh. My. God. Yes!*

*Scary ass Russian- That's my Pole!*

*Estonia- Fin, check your phone man!*

*Anime Chick- Ahh, boy x boy is always so hot!*

*Cool dude- Japan, stop being weird.*

*Finland- Haha, someone owes me five bucks.*

*Reverse Red Cross (Switzerland)- Damn it.*

*Cool dude: What was the bet?*

*Reverse Red Cross- That you and Germany would kiss before him and Poland.*

*Cool dude- dude what the hell? I love my Germ-man, but not like that.*

*Reverse Red Cross- Didn't say it'd have to be out of loving him. Like a dare or you being you and flirting with him.*

*Anime Chick- No! I'm already shipping America with someone.*

*Jacksepticeye (Ireland)- Whoa, ha ha ha ha, yes! I just saw that pic*

*Cool dude- Wait, what was that Japan?*

*Malta- ahh my two best friends, yes! I knew it. Also, how did you get my number America?*

*Cool dude- Never mind that, just focus on the picture! And also what Japan said, is everyone ignoring that?*

*Scary Ass Russian- Da. Why are you at Germany's house, America?*

*Cool dude- Because I wanted answers and now I got them.*

After awhile of texting and scrolling through social media, I turned down my volume and shut off my phone. Then I curled up under the covers and started to fall asleep. As long as those two aren't loud, I should sleep just fine.

((**Haha, this chapter went everywhere. I added the picture in at the top because for some reason it turns out fuzzy in the story part, but not the top part above the title. I dunno, it's stupid. And also, a little insight into the future I'm thinking about**

**drawing scenes from this story and posting them with it. Maybe incredibly detailed, maybe shitposted I'm not sure yet.))**

**I kinda wanna do pictures again but like. I dunno if you all want to see them. So should I or should I not?**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Interesting Development

**Russia's POV**

"I did not sleep well," America complained to me like I could do something about it. I looked at him unamused, the light in the classroom unbearably bright. He did not know what a lack of sleep was.

"По крайней мере, ты не пил себя спать (At least you didn't drink yourself to sleep)," I muttered and rubbed my forehead to try and soothe the headache that still lingered. Another night of pain and misery, bad memories and just creating more of them. Vodka helps soothe the pain. For a little bit, at least.

"I still can't speak Russian. All I got from that was a bunch of nonsense." America yawned and stretched out his arms. I rolled my eyes, not really wanting to give him the translation.

"Why arrre you so exhausted, zen?" I questioned him, figuring that I can use his pointless rambles to take my mind off of last night. At least, the parts of it I could remember.

"Germany and Poland were up late last night."

"What verrre zey doing, fucking?"

"Oh thank God no!" He melted in his relief from what I suggested not being true. "No, they were just talking and laughing loudly. Couldn't sleep because of that."

I nodded slowly, trying not to make the room spin more than it already was. Fucking headaches man.

"Besides, if they were, I wouldn't want to talk about it."

I grunted in response and held my eyes shut. Just for a second, I

told myself. Drowsiness almost made me fall onto my side of the table, but I quickly shot up and opened my eyes. Then they started to shut again. I was so tired.

"Dude, you look like shit. What happened to you last night?" America took note of my small moment of almost passing out. I meekly mumbled something in response before rubbing my eyes again.

"Rrrough night. Same as alvays."

The last time I had a rough night like last night, Ukraine had found me in the garden covered in dirt with an empty bottle of vodka in my hand. She threw me in our wheelbarrow and physically dropped me off in my class. That wasn't a good morning.

The rest of the school day went by as a blur. Countries came and talked, and it never really felt like they were there. Just shadows, hallucinations of what I wanted to happen maybe. But America was the one I knew was real. That annoying little bastard wouldn't leave me alone.

"So I ended up telling them off, and now they are angry at me."

"What are you going on about?"

"I don't know man, your not exactly a great conversationalist."

"Whateverrr." I rolled my eyes and headed to my locker. Not surprisingly, America fallowed me. This time I didn't bother to tell him to go away, cause it hadn't worked at all today. But my brother came up to me and was surprised that I had a tail.

"Бауырым, сіздің артыңыздан американдық бар. (Brother, there is an American following you.)" Kazakhstan joked pointing to him. He looked up at me confused, expecting a translation.

"Я знаю, он не оставит меня в покое. (I know, he won't leave me alone.)" I opened my locker and grabbed my ripped and used bookbag. I would get a new one, but I never really bothered to. Or

cared.

"You guys are talking about me ain't ya'?" America crossed his arms. "Бұл күлкілі, әдетте бәрі сізді жалғыз қалдырады. (That's funny, usually everyone leaves you alone.)" Kazakhstan poked fun at my lack of people skills. I rolled my eyes and just shoved him back. His golden wings flared up a little bit, almost slapping America in the face. I grabbed him by his arm and pulled him out of the way before he could get hit.

"Ну, этот не такой, как все. (Well, this one isn't like everyone.)" I let America go and he looked between me and my brother again.

"Yeah, you guys are talking about me."

"Wanna walk home together?" Kazakhstan asked me in English, eyeing America. I nodded about to say goodbye to America, but the annoying country tugged on my arm like a child.

"No, you said we were gonna hang out later today," he whined about something I didn't remember agreeing to. To be honest, I ignored him and just gave empty automatic answers half the time he was talking to me. Damn, I must've agreed to it without thinking.

"Did I rrreally?" I tried to get out of it, eyeing my brother for help. Sometimes with my siblings, we can give each other looks and mentally communicate. In this case, he knew what I wanted, he just thought it would be funny to annoy me.

"Don't worry, Rus. I can pick up our younger siblings by myself," Kazakhstan gave me a smug smile as I glared at him. He spun on his heels and started to walk away. But before he was gone completely, he shouted back to us, "Hang out with America, you do need to get out more. Just don't kill him."

"I kan't prrromise zat," I muttered through clench teeth.

"Ahh, shut up, you love me." America started to already push my buttons. "But don't worry, Russy, it's not just me. I asked Germany if

he wanted to hang out today but he was bringing Poland along, too."

I nodded in relief. "По крайней мере, я не буду с тобой наедине. (At least I won't be alone with you.)"

"What?"

"Nothing, Amerrrica. Nothing." I patted his back as we walked off.

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"Я никогда не должен был ничего говорить. (I should never have said anything.)"

We were sitting alone at a fast-food restaurant, to wait for Poland and Germany. But I just got a text from them saying they can't make it.

"Okay I recognized 'I' and 'never.'" America pointed at me with a fry. I raised a brow, actually kinda impressed he learned something. But that small spark of a feeling was squandered when he almost knocked over his drink putting his arm down.

"Shit!" He exclaimed catching it before it fell.

"идиот. (Idiot)"

"That one I recognize, and you say it all the time to me," He once again surprised me. But of course, it could be because it sounds very similar to the English translation.

"Vell, if zey arrren't koming why arrre ve still herrre?" I slumped back in my best and crossed my arms. Outside it was still bright out, and America suggested we take a window seat. Kind of happy we did, it made me feel less stuck and I could just look out of it and collect my thoughts.

"Because" America snapped me from the beginnings of my dozing off. He swallowed his drink and continued, "I'm still eating and you
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have yet to order."

"I'm not hungrrry." I once again lied to him.

America raised a brow and scanned my posture. I suddenly felt uneasy but didn't show it. America is smaller than me, I can easily take him down.

"Okay, sure." He shrugged and went back to eating. "Anyways, now that we are friends-"

"Hold on. Frrriends?" I tilted my head and gave him a confused look.

"Duh, yeah. We are now friends, whether you like it or not."

"Zanks forrr giving me choice."

"You're welcome." He smiled at me and I couldn't help but feel somewhat positive about establishing a new comrade. Even if it's America, he still is very useful. Plus, he somehow cares or finds me interesting, enough to want to hang out. Most countries don't do that.

America tapped my hand that was resting on the table and motioned his head to the side. Without seeming suspicious, I looked around the room to get a quick scan of everything.

"Japan is staring at us. She's been doing that for the past ten minutes now."
I spotted the Neko sitting in a booth, phone up to her ear, looking directly at us. I scanned over her and turned back to America. He nodded at me and I nodded back.

"Is she spying on us orrr something?" I asked, keeping my previously relaxed stature. Acting like you don't know someone is spying on you is hard unless you have the practice that I do.

"I don't know. You read the text she sent last night? Weirdo has me caught up in one of her ships." He took a drink of what he had. I did

remember reading that, but I also remember telling him that we basically ignored it.

"Probably stalking me to see how I can hook up with who is on the other end of her weird ship."

"Hmm, " I hummed as I rubbed my chin. "So it's veirrrd if she ships people, but norrrmal if you do the same?"

He paused, thinking about the reality of what I told him. "Know what?" He held out a finger at me, about to object. Instead, he mumbled, "shut up."

I laughed and he just shook his head at me. He was smiling, too, so I knew he didn't take it too seriously.

"Still though. What are we going to do about her?" America brought us back to the main topic. I shrugged, not really knowing if we could do anything.

"Hmm. Head home and see if she follows you." I suggested, hoping he would think that was a good idea and do that. Unfortunately, he's not as dumb as I thought he was.

"Uh uh, I see what you are trying to do," America pushed aside his empty food containers. "You're trying to get rid of me, but I' m like a parasite. Once I'm in, it's difficult to get rid of me."

"Vell you arrre a parrrasite alrrright." I smiled at the open insult he let me have. America frowned. But then he got that dreadful smirk.

"Ahh, do you not like me?"

"Nyet."

"But I like you~" the fucker decided to flirt with me. I held back a disapproving growl and looked away.

"Ahh, Russia, are you shy?" He leaned forward, setting his chin down on his hands. "Why? Has no one ever told you how hot you

are?~"

"Shut up, beforrre I make you." I glared at him, a weird feeling growing in my stomach from his last comment. I could tell my face was warm with embarrassment, and that frustrated me.

"Fine, fine." He stood up to take care of his food. But when he came back over he didn't sit back down. It confused me until he said, "I'll stop bugging you for today. But, tomorrow you have to hang with me and maybe someone else, too."

Thinking about it for a second, I figured that it wouldn't be the worst thing.

"Alrrright, fine. See you tomorrrow zen." I agreed and watched a satisfied America leave to head off wherever he was going. I glanced over to Japan and noticed she was no longer looking over in my direction, nor did she show any interest in fallowing America. Maybe we were wrong?

I looked out the window and saw America walking along the sidewalk. He looked around and was scrolling through his phone. Such a bland sight, almost blending right into the background. But I still found it the only thing interesting to see.

**Jaaapaaann is a spy! *le gasp* No one saw that coming, except maybe everyone. But don't you worry, my favorite cat and country hybrid has an important role to play. Just watch.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Japan the Rusame Fan

[image] [image]

**((Heh. I made that rhyme.))**
**Haha, still funny.**

**Narrator's POV**

It's been a few weeks now since Poland and Germany had started dating. They were happy, hanging out with each other when they could. Sometimes they would meet up with America and Russia to hang out. Those two had started to warm up to each other, Poland and Germany had noticed. America was no longer on edge whenever Russia approached him, and Russia was actually seen smiling at America's jokes.

It was around then that they knew that their plan was working.

Germany's phone went off and Poland moved off his shoulder so he could check it. It was a text from Japan.

" 'Ubdate', " Germany read out loud for Poland, " 'America und Ruzia haffe now left zee liprary und are heading to Ruzia's houze.' "

"Again?" Poland smiled. "Dey a really hitting it off den!"

"I know!" Germany sent a reply back to Japan and set his phone down. "Maype it von't take long for zem to sdart liking each other."

The two had both came up with a plan late one night. The same night America had demanded Germany tell him about his first date with Poland. Little did he know as he was struggling to fall asleep, the couple downstairs were talking about him and Russia. They both thought they had such good friends, helping them approach each other. Then they started to realize how well those two could work together. How good of friends they could be. How cute a couple they could be.

It was set, maybe due to being tired, that they would try and set America and Russia up. After all, they had set Poland and Germany up.

Knowing they couldn't do it on their own, Germany asked Japan to help them. Japan immediately jumped at the chance, reveling that 'Rusame', as she called it, was one of her favorite ships that had yet to come true. She was good at eavesdropping on conversations, sneaking up on people, and spying on them. She blamed it on being a cat, but it was in part of the amount of practice she's had. Currently, that's what she was doing now.

America was trying to tell Russia a story, on a topic that didn't really interest him. Trying not to be rude, Russia was nodding along and trying to at least pay attention. He has learned that he can be more irritating if he's not given the attention he wants.

"Anyways, I totally kicked their asses for it. I was all, 'If I ever see you even looking at Canada again, I'll do worse!'" He finished giving Russia a playthrough of his last fight with a country that had threatened Canada. He nodded along, respecting his protectiveness over his brother. He was like that with his siblings as well. He's been in many physical fights before, just to keep them safe.

"Now we are pretty chill. But my threat still staaaAAAHHH SHIT!"

America suddenly fell forward, grabbing onto Russia's shirt sleeve. He quickly grabbed him and swung him in a half-circle around himself, to try and catch him. Instead, he tripped over his feet and fell down, taking America down with him.

Russia hit his back, half on the sidewalk and half on someone's yard. His head had hit the grass, thank goodness, and with the added padding from his ushanka, he wasn't hurt too much. His chest and stomach hurt, though. Russia pushed up his hat from his eyes and saw that America had landed on his chest.

America lifted his head with a groan and froze. They both looked at each other for a second, unsure of what to do next. It was awkward, Russia frozen in place and America torn between making a joke or ignoring everything.

"Hi there Ruski.~" America purred, not knowing how else to act.

Russia took one look at his seductive expression and pushed him off of him. America hit the ground and let out another groan, his side stinging from the impact. Damn, he has a strong arm.

Russia rolled over and quickly sat up, holding a tight fist over his mouth. He was flustered, unsure why America's expression, his voice, and the feeling of his body pressed against his own affected him as much as it did then. He used to America's flirtatious remarks at that point, knowing he does it to everyone. But that one had something else to it, and he didn't want anything to do with it.

After a moment, they both awkwardly continued on their way to Russia's house. America kind of wanted to leave that suddenly quiet walk and go home, but Russia's siblings had started to grow quite fond of him. And they were looking forward to another visit.

Japan watched them leave through the gaps between the leaves of a bush. She didn't mean to make them both fall, just wanted to trip America in hopes of Russia catching him and them both having a cute moment. What had happened was beyond anything she could have planned. It was amazing! Thankfully, she was able to snap a photo before they moved.

She opened her group chat between her, Germany, and Poland and sent the picture.

*Neko-*

*Another result of my amazing work.*

*Germany- Thanks Japan, but you know you don't have to send pictures right?*

*Poland- Don't listen to him, Japan send any you can get.*

*Germany- Did you just give her permission to secretly photograph our friends?*

*Poland- Yes.*

*Neko- You didn't have to give me permission, I would have done it anyway.*

*Germany- Concerning.*

Japan put her phone away, grabbed up the fishing line she had set, and took off to head home. That was enough spying for today. She couldn't wait to tell her twin brother Sunrise when she got home. He didn't fully approve of her actions since he was more of a shounen-ai fan while she was more yaoi. Either way, he couldn't stop her.

She skipped past the road the other two went on and happily hummed to herself.

Russia glanced behind them and took note of yet another Japan sighting. She was everywhere it seemed. Everywhere Russia was with America, that is.

"How come your brother, Kaz has wings but no one else?" America asked, in an effort to break the silence.

Russia shrugged, not acknowledging that Kaz's younger brother had wings, too. "I don't know. He vas borrrn vith zem."

"Hmm. Do you know why some countries have wings and others don't?"

"Nyet." Russia began to think to himself about that. He knew a few countries had them. But most keep that to themselves. Poland he knew for certain had them. Emphasis on had. The poor boy had unspeakable torture done on him, and when it was through his once-proud white wings had vanished. Pulled, cut, burned, no one knew. He never said. But he was a reason why most countries keep that to themselves. Except for Russia's brothers, who had confidence that he wouldn't let anything happen to him.

"Well, I think it's cool."

Russia wasn't paying attention at that point, a mistake he'd regret in a few minutes. He started thinking if Poland has told Germany about them. Russia only knew because he had accidentally walked

in on him changing his shirt. That's when he saw the two healed over stubs. But since it was his father who had taken place in his torture, maybe it'll take him a little while.

At the same time, he knew Germany had secrets, too. All centered around the same country, too. His father. Even after all these years, the effects of that war are still attacking everyone. Even Russia.

Even his father.

((**Honestly kind of filler. But you get a picture anyway, so it balances it out.**))

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Under the Wraps

**Trigger warning here guys. Please, if you have any suicidal/ self-harm thoughts or tendencies please read at your own risk. I'll give a warning before the worst of it and tell u when it's safe. I'll also give a summary at the bottom of this chapter so you can still know key things that happened during the moment.**

**Narrator's POV**

Russia was drunk again. It wasn't a school night, so he didn't hold back. He grabbed a bottle from the cupboards, made sure his siblings were okay, and went upstairs to his room. A few chugs in, the tears started to flow. The memories became fuzzy, but the feelings were still there. The pain of his father's passing, the pain of having to stay strong for his family, the pain of having to deal with everyone giving him shit for stuff they didn't understand.

He sat on his bed and took another swig of the bottle. He whipped away the liquid from his mouth and looked around his room. So many things he's let build up in the mess he resides in. Photos, stuff his younger siblings had made for him, trinkets from his short childhood, and some of his dad's old stuff. A few medals, and his unshaken.

Russia stood, almost losing his balance, and slowly walked to his closet. He opened it, starting to move like a rag doll, and grabbed out the wooden chest that sat at the bottom.

He opened the chest and hesitated to make another move. Inside, rested on top of everything, was a Soviet Union flag. It was neatly folded and put away. Russia grabbed it with careful, trembling hands and held it up to his face. It smelled of smoke, gunfire, and whiskey. It wasn't appealing, but Russia didn't care. He still held it close to him, wishing he could hold his father instead of his old flag that had once hung proudly in his office.

Russia set that down and took out more things in the chest. A broken mirror, in that he noticed how much he was crying at that point. Some old photographs of USSR in his uniform, talking to allies, and even one with him shaking hands with Germany's dad.

Third Riche.

That bastard.

Russia moved to rip the photo in half, but he saw his dad's face in the old image. He was smiling, his heart hadn't been broken yet. The pains of the war hadn't settled in then. He looked happy. He couldn't ruin that.

He gently set the photo down and dug through more things. They were all cold to the touch, packed away for a while. The metals had begun to lose their shine, his clothes had started to smell musty, and his notes still looked as they had years before. He took another drink of his vodka, so he could feel more numbed about everything.

America was in his room, door locked, and throwing up again. Black liquid trickled down his chin and he whipped it away. He had sat his sunglasses aside on his nightstand this time, so he didn't break them again. His stomach churned, but his body was drained of any energy so he was left with the urge to throw up, but no strength to do it.

He groaned and let himself fall to the floor. The tiles were cold but he could barely feel it. That one wasn't too bad. It was a good thing he was alone in his room this time. Now if he could lucky like that every time, it'll save him the anxiety.

America didn't move for about ten minutes. Then he decided to lay down on his bed and rest. Until he can make sure he's not speaking another language again.

He grabbed his bag and dragged onto the bed with himself. That notebook that Russia had grabbed when they first started the project. The one he didn't let anyone touch. He wrote down everything about his episodes in that book. The language he speaks, the feelings he got, and everything that came to mind during that.

He couldn't let anyone see that. People would start to think of countless different things. Maybe even think that he was a bad country.

Putting the book away, America laid down and went on his phone. For a split second, in the dark of the off-screen, he could see if his reflection. He could see his two dark eyes looking back at him. He quickly sat up, grabbed his glasses, and put them back on. Then he turned back to his phone, turning it on.

"Huh." He hummed in surprise. He got a miss call from Russia.

"English? Am I speaking- yeah, okay, I'm good." America checked what language he was speaking, then slowly sat back up. He clicked on Russia's number to call him back and held up his phone. It rang for a few seconds before stopping.

"Wassup Rus?"

Silence.

"Dude, hello?"

"AMERICA!!!!" Russia loudly exclaimed into the phone.

"YIPE!" America jumped away, almost falling off the bed. He held the phone a good distance away from him before complaining, "Dude, no need to shout."

"Amerrrriccaaaa." Russia rolled out the sounds in his name. He looked at his phone weirdly, not knowing what to do. Was this some sort of joke, or him just trying to mess with him.

"Dude, are you okay?"

"Америка, ты странный, и это нормально. Странно, ооооченьь. Мне нравится странно. (America, you are weird and that's okay. Weird is goooood. I like weird.)"

"English please."

"Yourrr English."

"Ah, Ru-Ru, Russia? Dude, " America stammered then let out a quick sigh. His headache was still fading, and Russia was doing no help for it. "What are you doing? Cause, like, your acting so weird right now."

"Koommeee heeerrre." Russia once again elongated his vowels. He hiccuped then came some mumbling until a desperate, "Please."

Soft sobs came from the other line and America gasped slightly. Was Russia crying? He's never seen that guy cry, and it seems so unlike him. He barely shows any serious emotion, and to hear his voice shake and the gasp for air scared him.

"Hang on Russia, I'm coming."

America grabbed his jacket– it was oddly cold that day– and ran down the stairs.

"Mom, Dad, I'm going to Russia's house!" He called over his shoulder as he pulled on his shoes.

"Okay, sweetie!" France called from somewhere in the house.

"Say 'hi' to Belarus for me please!" Yelled New Zealand.

If his dad were in front of him, he knew he'd give a disapproving grunt. He never liked Russia, mostly because of his dad. They were allies, but he always got the feeling that his father never approved of the country.

But it's not like America was any better.

"Russia, are you home right now?" America ran down the sidewalk, crunching on the dead leaves that had started to build up.

"Da." Russia hiccupped and made a choking noise, maybe from crying or something else. "Катайтесь на своем белоголовом орле, вы можете летать здесь. (Ride your bald eagle, you can fly here.)"

"I heard a yes, the rest of it I don't know." America turned down the street and ran past a surprised Scotland.

"Watch whaur ye ur runnin' ye a bampot (crazy) American!" He yelled at him before continuing on his walk.

America made it to Russia's house and hung up. Outside were a few of his siblings. Belarus was one of them, flying on Kaz's back. "Hey, New Zealand says 'hi'!" He called up to her before walking into the house.

"Russia!?" He cried out only to get no answer back. Maybe he was in his room, he thought to himself.

Upstairs, it was quiet enough for him to hear crying from Russia's room. He slowly tiptoed up to his door, scared to make any loud sounds. He wanted to barge in, ask what's wrong, and comfort him. But the thought of rudely entering scared him, when he normally wouldn't care.

"Russia?" America knocked on his door.

A loud gasp and a louder cry made America's heartbeat increase. He sounded in pain like he just got stabbed. What if he was hurt?

"Russia, are you okay!?" He threw open the door and froze in place. A large wooden chest was on the floor, wide open. A red flag with the communist symbol was draping over his desk, and other Red Amy memorabilia were scattered everywhere. Pins, broken glass from shattered picture frames, maps, books, uniforms. It must've come from that chest.

All of this he saw a few moments later. His eyes were trained on the floor. Small blood droplets on the floor, a slim trail leading from one spot on the floor to the bed. On it sat Russia, crying with his hands covering his face. Almost unnoticeable against his red skin, was dark red blood trailing down his arms. He must have cut himself with the glass and got hurt!

"Oh, God! Are you okay, what happened?" He ran to the man, avoiding the blood on the floor and the shards of glass.

Russia looked up at America, some blood smeared on his face. His eyes were red from years, cheeks slightly puffy and lip trembling. A

steady stream of tears poured down his cheeks and drops were visible on his white tank top.

"America?" His voice broke. "Why did you hang up?"

America ignored that question, along with the empty vodka bottle by him, and took his arms. He looked at his hands to examined any visible cuts. But he didn't see any so where was he bleeding?

*** **trigger warning***

"Russia, I don't see any- Oh no." His eyes widened when he looked past Russia's hands and to his wrists. The blood originated from there, with the multiple cuts slashed across. For a moment, America forgot how to breathe. His hands trembled from the sight and he just stared wide-eyed at the terrifying revelation.

"Re-run Russia? Do you, " he gulped to steady the shakiness of his voice. "Do you cut?"

Russia was staring into space, not even realizing what was happening. His eyelids drooped almost half-closed. A distant look was on his face until America stood in his line of view.

"Russia, what's wrong?"

He looked at the country in front of him and seen he was crying. "Ameerrica, why arrre you crrrying?" He rubbed his thumb against the bottom of his eye and panicked when he saw red liquid smear with his movement. "Oh nyet, yourrr bleeding!"

"No, I'm not, you are." He told him holding up his own arm. Russia looked at him confused then down at his arm. He wasn't bleeding, he shouldn't be. But on his arm were multiple cuts, all ranging from shallow to deep. That's weird. He has bandages to cover those. Where are they?

Russia slowly looked around, basically ignoring the frightened American, and tried to find his bandages. He spotted them on the floor, sprawled out like discolored ribbons.

That's when he remembered.

He read through his father's notes again. He looked through the photo albums again. He missed his dad in a painstaking way again. He saw his razor again. He did that to himself again. Again.

"Nyet...." His hands trembled and he couldn't stop them. America noticed and jumped up in fear.

***you're good, maybe a little touchy tho***

"Don't worry Russia. I-I can, I'm going to go get you stuff." He quickly stammered out before running out of his room and down the hall. He had once gotten a scrape trying to do parkour outside his house, so he knew where his first aid kit was. In the bathroom, under the sink.

He ran back into Russia's room with the small box in hand and was thankful to see Russia hadn't moved. He was still sitting there, a frightened expression matched with trembling hands.

Silently and quickly, America cleaned and bandaged his arms with new bandages. His mind raced with many thoughts, none of them with any good conclusions. Once that was done, he had Russia lay down on his bed and he began to clean his room. Picking up and disposing of the glass, gathering Russia's father's things, and trying to neatly put them back in the chest, he held back his own tears. He knew Russia wasn't fully happy, he had lost his dad after all, but he just never realized the extent of that pain.

"Americana." Russia groaned, turning onto his side and letting his arm dangle over the side of the bed. "Coommee heeerre."

"Russia, your drunk, you should sleep," America finished putting some stuff back. He had found the bloody razor and knew enough not to leave it here. So instead, he wrapped it up in a paper towel and put it in his jacket pocket. That, he took off and set on the back of the desk chair.

"I von't sleep unless you kome herrre," Russia argued, this time managing not to slur his words. He sat up slightly, his eyes hazily focusing on America.

America sighed, looked at the Russian pitifully, and obeyed. It's not like he was gonna leave him alone now anyway. He had sent a text to his dad that he was gonna spend the night there after he had finished cleaning up the drops of blood.

He sat down next to Russia, and he sat up with childlike excitement. Clapping his hands, he exclaimed, "Yay, my Amerrrikan!" Then he grabbed him into a tight hug, pulling him down onto the bed with him.

America tensed up, not expecting that but didn't move. Not that he could anyway, Russia had a very strong grip. What he had said gave him a weird feeling, too. He couldn't place it, but it made his stomach lightweight.

Russia yawned, refused to loosen his grip on the country when he tried to move or wiggle free and held him close to himself. He was warm and had cleaned his room. The American was nice, and he liked people who were nice. And for Russia in his drunken mindset, he thought the best way to make sure he didn't lose the nice country was to cuddle him in his bed.

America was having a gay panic. It's one thing flirting with him, but another sleeping next to him.  Russia had his arms wrapped around his waist, hands dangerously low. His chin was nestled by his neck, his heavy breathing sending chills down his spine. America couldn't move, or even put an inch of space between them. His body was firmly pressed up against the Russian, cradled in to fit perfectly.

"Oh God, it's gonna be a long night."

**((Heyo dear readers. Just a small side note, I added the Scott sighting in this chapter because I just love their accents! And holy molly long chapter!**
**But yeah, what will happen when our dear Russia wakes up? Who knows? Besides me that is.))**

*****Summary*****

**America finds out that Russia self harms, and it took Russia a moment to remember that he did. He hazily remembers that it**

**had to do with the pain of his father's death, and him blaming himself. For a few minutes, he was in sort of a shock over what he did.**

**That's about it.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Morning After

**Russia's POV**

My eyes slowly rose open, but I hissed when a bright light burned them. My stomach growled, from pain and from hunger. If I could have, I knew I would've thrown up. But I had nothing in my stomach to do that. When did I eat last? I think I made food, but did I eat any? I can't even remember. Uhh, my head hurts just trying to think.

I rolled over, hoping that if I find a comfortable position I could feel like I wasn't internally dying. I hit something, I wasn't sure what, but I knew it wasn't supposed to be there.

"что за хрень на моей кровати? (What the fuck is on my bed?)"

I tried to move, but something had my arm pinned down. Panicking, I tried to see what it was but all I could make out was the fuzzy image of my blanket lumped over something. Was there actually something under there? Or did the blanket feel a hundred times heavier? Ehh, my eyes are so dry.

I blinked a few times, hoping to get some moisture onto my eyes and to reduce the pain of the bright lights. Squinting was all I could do at the moment, so that would have to do.

I peaked under the covers and quickly slammed them back down. If my stomach didn't have enough stuff to go through, now it has the vigorous butterflies swarming around. America was there! He was pinning my arm down! He was in my bed! He was cuddling my arm! Again! Oh God, I was up against him, too.

"Ах, дерьмо, нет! (Ahh, shit, nope!)" I tore my arm free and tried to move away from him. "Что, черт возьми, происходит - почему это всегда с ним? (What the hell is going- why is it always with him?)"

Furious, I kicked him off the bed and felt a little amused when the loud thump was followed by a shout of pain. America stirred slightly and started to get up. I glared at him, my anger overriding my confusion and dizziness. Why was he in my bed- why was he in my house!? I didn't invite him over, what the hell was he thinking?!

"Uhhh, " he groaned, his back to me. "Where am I?"

"In my rrroom."

He jumped and spun around. For some strange reason, however, he slapped his hands over his eyes before he fully faced me. "Where are my sunglasses, do you see them?" He frantically started feeling around the bed and floor, looking for what he said.

"Open yourrr eyes and you vould find zem." I snapped, rubbing my forehead. God, it fucking hurt like hell. None of my questions are going to be answered if he is going to be concerned over his stupid shades.

"Russia, seriously man where are they?" He continued to feel around the bed for them, holding one hand over his eyes.

"What arrre you doing herrre?" I restated, or now just said. I couldn't focus on whether or not I actually asked him anything. "I neverrr told you to kome overrr."

I spotted the glasses and pushed them towards his reach. He grabbed them and turned around to face away from me to put them on. Why the heck was he acting so weird, does he have like a scar by his eye or something?

"You did invite me over yesterday." America stood and faced back towards me, hand on his extended hip.

"What, why the hell vould I do zat?" I rubbed my forehead, trying to concentrate. I sat crossed legged so I could sit comfortably on my bed. Why would I? What even happened yesterday? I remember coming into my room, I-I had my vodka with me. My father's stuff...

"Dude, you look like your trying to really rack your brain there and it ain't working." America sat down on the edge of the bed and

rubbed his eyes under his glasses. "Look, you called me when you were super wasted, saying some things in Russian, then you started crying. I came over and- and umm..."

I squinted at him, confused and not remembering anything he was telling me. Fuzzy images did come to mind, none of them pretty. I know I tore my bandages off and had my razor- wait, where is that? Where are my bandages!?

I jumped up looking around the room, startling America. However, I got up way too fast and got light-headed. I stumbled for a bit before leaning against the wall and rubbed my forehead again. Peering through the tiny slits of my eyelids, I noticed I had bandages on my arms. Cleaner, newer ones compared to the ones I knew I was wearing yesterday. But how?

"I'm sorry."

America stood up and tilted his head down at the floor. My brain was still trying to hang onto whatever brain cells I had left, so I didn't understand why he said he was sorry. But then I looked to my bandaged arms and noticed some red stains on his shirt.

Then it hit me.

"Get out."

"Russia, please I won't-"

"I said GET OUT!!!!" I slammed my fist on the wall and the guy jumped five feet off the floor. My fists we're shaking from the amount of pressure I was using in clenching them. Sure I didn't have a proper mindset, but I know enough that America knew what was on my wrists. He had seen them. The fresh ones, too, I guess.

I glanced over, not exactly sure how long I had angrily glared at the floor. America was still standing frozen in place. Except for his hands, which nervously tugged at his shirt, twisting and stretching it.

He was scared.

Why was he scared!? What did he have to hide that was found out by someone?! America is a gossiper, that's for sure. No doubt, he'd tell someone about this and everyone would give me shit about it. Or worse. They would do what they thought would help me.

"Arrre you deaf? I said 'get out'." I turned to him and spoke in a deathly grave voice.

"Why do you want me to leave?" He shot back at me, suddenly puffing out his chest. His eyebrows narrowed at me, his hidden eyes no doubt determined. "Why do you push everyone away?"

"Bekause, " I scoffed, getting ready for a well overdue rant, "the other kountrrries zat do seem to take interrrest in me, actually turrrn out to be backstabberrrs zat rrrather pick at who my father vas, zen actually karrre about what I do!"

I got up in his face, narrowed eyes, painful headache pounding at my skull, and jaw clenched. He leaned back, trying to stand his ground but I knew he was scared shitless. "You kan play like you actually karrre about what I do, but I know enough."

He started to back up, and I followed after him, pushing him towards the door. "So, if zat's what you'rrre here to do because ve all know you never got along vith my dad, zen just do it and go!"

My chest was rising at a fast past, a snarl showing my teeth and my fists aching to punch something. America stood in the doorway after he panicked and opened the door. He held his arm in front of him, in a defense position, his body turned in case he needed to run, and his entire figure trembling.

Then a tear dripped down from under his glasses and went down his cheek. I inhaled sharply when I noticed and was hit with a twinge of guilt. That in turn, made me angrier.

So I shoved him out of my room and slammed my door. I didn't know how early or late it was, but my siblings by now we're used to my yelling and causing a racket. Bad thing to be used to, but I'm not the only one in the house that does it. Ukraine does it a lot, too.

I collapsed back onto my bed and groaned into my pillow. My throat was dry and stinging with pain from my yelling. The fire spread from my throat to my chest when the realization that I had made America cry hit me fully.

"Uhhhhhh." I groaned, rubbing my face with my hands. He came when I called him crying–apparently– and he also bandaged my wrists for me. I didn't wake up in a hospital, so he did keep what he saw quiet. And I screamed at him in return.

I waited for the front door to close, signaling that America had left and I could be rid of him and the guilt he brought. I reminded myself that no one would have wanted to befriend me unless it was for something that benefits them. Why else would he stay longer than he needed, other than to judge our situation and get a laugh out of it?

Not everyone has both their parents.
A knock at my door surprised me. For a fleeting moment, I hoped it was America. So i could apologize. Instead, I heard a different voice in a different language.

"Ресейді? Сенімен бәрі жақсы ма? (Russia? Are you okay?)" Kazakhstan asked.

I didn't answer.

The door opened and he stepped in.
"Аға? (Brother?)"

"Он ушел? (Did he leave?)" I didn't bother to look at him, just held my face in my hands.

"Жоқ, ол диванда отыр. Ол сізге сөйлескіңіз келгенше ол жерде күте тұратынын айтты. (No, he's sitting on the couch. He told me to tell you that he'd wait there until you wanted to talk.)"

I nodded and hummed as a response.
After a few minutes of silence, Angel Boy left with a silent bye.

Wait there until I wanted to talk, huh? Well, he's gonna wait there for a long time. Cause I'm not gonna leave my room at all until he

leaves.

~~~~~~~~~

I woke up, my headache was almost completely gone. My wrists still stung sharp stabbing pains that quickly brought back the memories of earlier today.

America.

My wrists.

My yelling.

My guilt.

Yeah...

"I gotta drink something," I mumbled to myself, for once not meaning vodka. My throat was sore, and my tongue tasted foul. I needed the refreshing touch of cold water immediately.

It was dark out, my digital clock reading that it was almost four in the morning. I had stayed in my room, writing at my desk. That project me and America were working on, I needed to finish that as soon as possible so I can finally be fully free of him.

Downstairs, I was met with a surprise.

America was there, sleeping on the couch. He was still sat upright, chin resting on his hand, elbow on the couch shoulder. Like he fell asleep sitting up.
He really did wait.

I chugged down a few glasses of water and sat down next to him. He was still asleep, so I reached out to tap his shoulder. But my next move was halted. What would I even say? What could I say? 'Sorry I screamed in your face for helping me'? No.

"Боже, я жалок. (God, I'm pathetic.)" I slumped backward and let myself sink deep into the couch.
~~~~~~~~~

"I don't speak Russian still, man."

I shot upright and looked at him. He sat up and stretched out his arms over his head, cracking his back loudly.

"Geeze, my neck hurts. Whoever said falling asleep on couches was comfortable, has clearly never slept on a couch." He started off with a complaint like he always did.

I nodded slightly then looked down at the floor. My heart was racing, my chest tightening to where it almost felt like I had to force myself to breathe. My palms started to sweat, and my face buzzed with warmth.

"I'm sorry."

"You don't have to be." He rested his hand on my shoulder. "I understand. You wanted to keep that to yourself, not wanting anyone to find out. You were scared about what they could do, having that knowledge and maybe possibly using that against you."

I nodded along, relieved he could put it into words for me.

"But, I promise I won't say anything to anyone." He made me look at him to see he was serious. I nodded again.

"So, you came over. You want to talk to me about it?"

I sighed and looked away. He took his hand off my shoulder and it felt like that reassurance was gone. So I rubbed my neck and held my mouth shut.

When he set his hand on my raised arm, I looked to him with intrigued eyes. Why did he feel safe to talk to?

Blaming my persistent hangover, and tiredness, I opened my mouth to speak, "Yeah. I'll talk about it."

**((Hello, my sweet dear readers. Love that I cut off that part right before their bonding moment?**

**Hehehehehe, I know I do.**

**But if anyone is dealing with depression/self-harm/suicidal thoughts and/or actions, please talk to someone about it. I know it's scary, but a simple conversation with someone who could help can do wonders. Please, your not alone.))**

**Anyways, till next time my comrades. Ësgöge'ae'!**

**~Galaxy**

# Party and Drinks

**America's POV**

A lot of my ideas are great, arguably the best. But this? This one was my best one yet.

"America, this is a horrible plan," Canada whispered to me as we snuck outside our house. The world was dark, the moon only a sliver of light.

Everyone in the house was either asleep or getting ready to. Mom I knew was a heavy sleeper. She once slept through one of our frequent family panics when our brother Australia managed to find a giant ass snake and bring it inside the house. He said it was cute.

Our Dad? It was him we had to be careful of.

"Shhh. You'd said you follow along." I reminded him and he just hung his head low. "Besides, this is going to be awesome."

Canada looked down off our roof and gulped. "Oor definitions of awesome are completely different." He shut his eyes tight and pressed his back firmly against the wall. I looked down and just shook my head.

"Dude, it's not that high up. We are only on the second floor." I shuffled my feet to try and move around the outside wall that encased our attic. On the other side of the house was a tree that had its branches extended just enough for us to jump fo it and then climb down. Easy peasy.

Well. That's not what Canada said when I told him about it, however.

"Is this party really important?" Canada jumped to me and latched onto my arm, leaning away from the edge.

"Duh. It's a party in the woods, why wouldn't that be important?" I

lead him to the tree I had mentioned and stopped at the edge of the roof. The dark shadows of branches we're clear just enough for me to get an idea of where to jump. But I pulled out my phone flashlight to be sure.

"Because it's a party in the woods. Who does things like that?"

"Me. Now, you want to go first, or should I?" I extended out my arm, to see if he would take any action to jump. He looked at me with wide eyes, narrowed them, and hit my shoulder hard. I winced and held back a shout of pain. For being a soft country, he can really throw a punch.

"Please, just hold the light." He looked at the tree and launched off the roof. For a moment my heart skipped a beat when he lost his grip on a branch. But he pulled himself up and balanced himself just fine.

He gave me a thumbs up and started climbing down. I breathed a sigh of relief that he didn't get himself hurt. And when he was out of the way, I jumped and climbed down as well.

"Great, now that wasn't so hard was it?" I clapped my hands together, thrilled that I didn't fall and die. And that we were almost out of the danger zone. The diameter was our property line, so we had a little way until we were out of harm's way.

"Let's just get going, eh?" He mumbled and we started off towards the sidewalk by the street. House lights were still on, but most of them were off. Street lights led our way as we laughed and shoved each other around. Once he knew he was safe, Canada lightened up.

"Okay, okay. Out of ten, what do you think is my chance of hooking up with a guy tonight?" I asked, laughter filling my question. Canada tapped his chin and hummed unnecessarily loud.

"Oh come on, is it really that hard to think about?" I gently shoved him and he laughed at me. "Think about it, I'm obviously good looking-"

"Sure, bud."

"Aaand." I put my finger over his mouth so he couldn't insult me again. "I'm charming. I can totally get a guy."

"If you're so confident, then why did you ask me to rate your chance?" He shoved my hand away and raised a brow. I shrugged. Mostly it was so I could see what he thought, and also give him a hint to what my plan was for this party.

"Oohh, so that's why yoo are bringing Russia to the party then, eh?"

"What do you mean?" I raised a brow. I did tell Russia he was coming with us, whether he likes it or not. I haven't really ever been giving him choices when I talk about hanging out, so why start now?

Besides. I just need to make sure he is okay at all times.

"You wanna hook up with a guy, and you've been getting closer with Russia. I figured you had a crush on him or something."

"Dude, seriously?" I laughed nervously, probably not doing anything to suggest he was wrong. "Is that the vibe you were getting from that?"

"Duh."

I shook my head and was about to object but Canada continued.

"You flirt with him a lot more than you do with others now, and you've been at his hoose so much now that Dad doesn't even question it anymore."

"So...?" I rubbed the back of my neck. What Canada said started to appear to me as well. "That doesn't mean anything. I just find the guy, um... Interesting. Plus he's straight, so it wouldn't even matter if I did. Which I don't."

"Like someone being straight would ever stop yoo." He elbowed me with a wink. I laughed him off and focused on the road ahead of me. The lights above us buzzed as tiny insects flew around them, entranced in its light. Why did I find Russia so interesting? Maybe because I didn't know too much about him, and just assumed I did.

Now I know quite a lot about him. That night at his house, he told me everything that had been on his mind. His father's passing, how he never properly dealt with it, the sudden responsibilities of a parent being dumbed onto him, and the isolation he felt from everyone at school and in town. I didn't know what to say, but I did try to comfort him the best I could. It seemed to be working so far, I haven't gotten a call from drunk Russia yet so that's a plus.

And his razor? I let him know I took it and disposed of it. He understood and allowed me to. I know we didn't know each other as long as some of my other friends, but I didn't want anything to happen to him. So I told him to call me if he needed anything again, or he just needed to talk.

We walked up to Russia's house and I knocked on the door. A few seconds later, Kaz opened the door. He looked happy to see us, his golden wings reflecting any and all light that hit them. That must be hard to play hide and seek with.

"Hey, it's the American!" Kaz greeted me standing out of the way for me to come inside.

"What up Kaz-man?" I gave him a high five, to which he returned. "This is my brother Canada."

"'Ello, it's a pleasure to meet yoo." Canada offered his hand to shake. Kaz nodded and returned his greeting as well.

"Where's Rus?" I looked around the room. He wasn't anywhere in sight and I couldn't help but feel worried about that. We both agreed that for now, it was always best for him to be by someone.

"He's up in room, he had grab something. But that was little bit ago, now."

After he said that, I dashed up the stairs and bolted right up to his door. With no hesitation, I threw open his door and prepared myself to see another horrible sight. Instead, I saw him passed out on the bed. He was dressed and ready to go, in some ripped jeans, an Adidas jacket with a white tank top.

I exhaled deeply, relieved that he had passed out instead of doing something to himself. Worry out of the way, I walked over to him and nudge his face.

"Russia, dude, wake up."

"нет, позволь мне спать вечно.(No, let me sleep forever.)"

"English speaker here."

"Be gone." He shoved me away weakly. I didn't move and his hand dropped down off the side of the bed like an arm of a rag doll.

"Nope, " I grabbed his arm and started to pull him off the bed, "there's a party tonight and your coming and having a great time." My words became strained when he started to become heavier the more I pulled.

He groaned again but reluctantly sat up. I smiled at him proudly and he hazily gave me a look. It took him a moment to gather himself up again, but when he did we walked downstairs. Canada and Kaz were casually talking, Ukraine somehow appearing on the couch with them.

"There yoo are! Did yoo know that they are coming to the party, as well?" Canada jumped up from the couch and ran over to me. I nodded, knowing a lot of people were going.

"Yeah, and if we go now, we won't be late." I ushered everyone out the door like there was a fire inside. Russia gave some resistance, so I physically pushed him out.

"Now, to the party!"

Before we even got there, we could hear it. Music was playing, colorful lights peered through the trees and the sound of voices echoed around us. It was late fall, so this was the outdoor party before it got too cold to have one.

When we got there, Ukraine pulled Canada away from us and disappeared into the crowd. Kaz said something in his language and flew off as well. Which left me and Russia to meet up with Poland

and Germany. Normally, neither of them wouldn't be at a party like this but I convinced them to come anyways.

"Okay, you guys ready to have some fun?" I pulled everyone in for a huddle. Germany fixed his glasses nervously and shook his head. I saw Poland look to Russia, and he gave him a wink.

"Bol und I vere konna hang back from zee drinks tonight." Germany nervous rubbed his hands, looking to Poland then to me.

"Ahh, come on Ger-man, you were the only one I knew that could beat Ireland in a drinking contest!" I patted his back and he looked around with worried eyes. "I'm not asking you to get wasted, I'm just saying you should loosen up. You've been really uptight lately. You deserve a break."

Poland grabbed his hand and intertwined their fingers. He gave him a kiss on the cheek and my heart melted. God Damn it, they are so cute together.

"Don't worry, I'll make sure he relaxes," he gave us a wink and I swear to God, Germany's face went bright red. For a moment, I didn't understand what he meant. When I did, I covered my mouth in shock, and Russia smiled proudly.

"That's my Pole." He patted the country on the back and Poland smiled. Germany grabbed me by my jacket, almost lifting me up in the air.

"Did he chust zay vat I zink he chust zaid?" He panicked and I just started laughing.

"Dude, I'm just going to say, " I pried myself out of his grip and stood flat on my feet. Hand on his shoulder, I gave my best advice, "get some."

"Not helbing." He forced through clenched teeth. Then he suddenly jumped when two arms wrapped around his waist and dragged him away from me. The yelp sound he made was very dignified.

"Come on. Let's leave those two alone." I told Russia and he nodded. We walked away from them, glancing behind just to see the panic

look on Germany's face get pulled away into a kiss from Poland. They, again, are so cute.

"20 bucks says they don't do it, and just end up talking." I betted Russia, extending my hand. He smiled and shook it, sealing the deal.

"I'm the one who told Poland to do zat, so you kan give me money now." He smirked triumphantly and held out his hand expectantly.

"Nope. Wait till they tell us what happened."

We went over to a table where drinks where being offered. Ireland and Ecuador were the ones making the drinks, so I knew I was either gonna regret it, or enjoy it. I've drunk with Ireland before. I don't stand a chance, man.
And I found out Russia is the one who brings his own Vodka to a party. To be fair, that'd probably be safer.

Unless he chugs the whole god damn thing.

"Russia, dude, seriously!" I picked him up off the ground. He had tripped over his feet again and was struggling to walk. I was only slightly buzzed, not getting too far because I quickly realized I would have to make sure Russia didn't do anything stupid. Which left me with not finding a guy in the dark and having a good time. Oh well, this dumbass's safety is more important.

"Grrround is moving too much." He complained, this time in English. The number of times I have to tell him I don't understand Russian is getting annoying. More annoying than me! And I didn't think a thing like that is possible.

"The ground isn't moving, dude." I shook my head. "Come on, let's just get you home."

Russia nodded and spun around. He bumped into someone, spilling their drink all over his shirt.

"¡Oh Rusia! lo siento mucho! (Oh, Russia! I am so sorry!)" The voice of Mexico quickly apologized before he walked off. Spanish I could understand, so I knew roughly what he said.

"Aww, man." Russia's voice broke like he was deeply upset about his shirt. "My shirrrt?" He turned back to me, looking down and puffing out his bottom lip. "It's dirrrty."

I held back a laugh and shook my head. "It's okay, man, it's just a little....wet, " blood rushed to my cheeks when I actually looked at his chest. His white shirt was pressed up against his skin tightly, showing his red-colored chest. I had never seen him without a shirt, and in this lighting and mood, it was the worst time. Cause he was actually built.

"Damn~," I smirked and looked at him for a second longer before turning my head away.

"Какие? (What?)" He slipped into Russian again. "Вы можете помочь мне снять это, я не хочу носить мокрую рубашку. Это липкое. (Can you help me get this off, I don't wanna wear a wet shirt. It's sticky.)"

"Dude I don't know what you're-" my sentence was cut off with a squeaked when I turned around to face him again. He was taking off his shirt, his sweater already discarded on the ground.

My eyes went wide as he took off his shirt and handed it to me. I looked down, ignoring the fact that I was flustered as fuck and grabbed his shirt.

"Америка, посмотри, какой ты красный. Человек, ты выглядишь так смешно. (America, look at how red you are. Man, you look so funny.)" He continued, me not understanding anything. I didn't allow myself to look at him, having an internal gay panic again. He actually looked hella hot. And I hope to God that's whatever Ireland gave me talking.

"Америка, ты покачиваешься (America, you're swaying)," Russia mumbled before falling onto me. I yelped, catching him but falling against a tree. His face was pressed against the side of my cheek, my hands on his abs trying to push him off of me, and his arm not holding his empty bottle of Vodka against the tree right by my head.

"Ahhh, Russia, what are you doing!" I panicked, butterflies vigorously flying around my stomach. Oh God, I was fucking attracted to him right now and slightly drunk. I do not need to have him pressed up against me.

"Why arrre you so close to me?" He finally spoke in English, leaning off of me and onto his arm against the tree. "You arrre tomato."

"Shut up and go away, your too close." I crossed my arms and tried to lean away. Russia looked at me puzzled, but then looked at his exposed chest then to my flustered face.

"Oohhh." He realized and I hoped that'd be enough for him to take a few steps back. Instead, he leaned close to my face and smirked. His eyes were half-lidded, an eyebrow raised.

"Do you like what you see, Ame~?" He grabbed my hand and set it on his chest. I jumped and was trying to melt into the tree at this point.

Russia started laughing loudly and backed away slightly. He let go of my hand and I quickly held it towards my chest.

"You flirrrt vith everrryone, but you kan't take it when someone does it to you!" He poked my face, dropping the bottle on the ground. He didn't realize it though.

"Shut up Russia." I shut my eyes and turned my head away.

"Hey, hey. America." He poked my face with every syllable. I looked back at him, annoyed more than flustered now.

"You'rrre kute~" he rubbed my cheek with his thumb.

I fell down to the ground and hid my face in my knees. Russia laughed loudly again and tripped over his feet again, landing down on his back.

"Whoa, brother!" Kaz came swooping down and helped Russia to his feet. "You gotta get home, your bad."

"Know he's not, he's good he svearrrs," Russia slipped into talking

into the third person. He laughed to himself and leaned against Kaz for support.

"What's wrong America?" Kaz asked, pointing to me sitting on the ground and only peaking through the gap in my arms.

"Russia is being an asshole," I mumbled then stood up. Kaz looked at my hand and seen that I held Russia's shirt in it. His sweater was still on the ground, too, Russia standing on it.

"You want me get him home?" Kaz offered picking up his sweater and Russia moving to lean against a tree. I looked around, seeing that most of the excitement had died down by now.

"Nah man." I shook my head. "I'll take him home, you can go have fun."

"You sure?" Kaz pressed further.

"России нравится хорошая страна. (Russia likes nice country.)" Russia came over to me and wrapped his arm around my shoulders, using me as support again. He lifted his cupped hand to his mouth and was very confused as to why he didn't have his bottle of vodka in it.

"Yeah. Besides, I gotta sneak back home. Do you know where Canada is?"

"Naah. Last I seen he with Ukraine somewhere. Yelling something on hockey."

"Nice, he actually got some drinks in."
"He told someone he'd attack them while riding moose."

"Slightly confused, but he'll be fine. Dad isn't too hard on him." I nudged Russia off my shoulder when he started to lean down. His eyes were closed and he looked like he was gonna pass out. Man, we gotta get going, its a long walk.

"Okay. Here his sweater, just tell him put on something." Kaz nudged to his exposed chest and I nodded, avoiding looking at it.

"Got it, man. Nice work on your English, too." I complimented. I always kind of felt bad after that comment I had made about him not speaking English. I found out he only recently started learning English, too.

He nodded, giving me a handshake. Then he flew off to a group of countries I couldn't see well enough to tell who they were.

"Come on Rus, let's get you home." I handed him his sweater and looked at it very confused. Then his eyes widened slightly with realization and put it on.

"Kan nice kountrrry stay vith me?" Russia pleaded like a child. He grabbed the hood of my jacket and held on like it was a leech. "I don't vant to be alone."

I sighed and rubbed my forehead. My chest actually hurt when he said that. But I knew if I stayed, I'd get my ass kicked by my dad. Still, I couldn't leave Russia alone while he's drunk. Not after that one night.

"Fine, I'll stay with you. But I'm not sleeping next to you."

Russia just clapped his hands with delight and he giggled like a child. Then he held back ono my hood and whispered to me, "Rrrussia like nice kountrrry."

I chuckled and lead him down the path back home. "Man, you are never gonna believe what you said."

**((Looooooong! Like over 3000 words long. But oh well. Also, Poland taking charge! Go tiny PTSD child! Also, something I forgot to mention; Poland does have visible scars from what Third Reich and USSR had done to him.**

**Also, Japan was at the party. Spying with her phone camera. Imagine what she caught.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' my comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Consequences

**Narrator's POV**

America was laying on the couch with a cold damp towel on his forehead. His skin felt like it was burning, his head had a pounding drum beating in it, and his mouth tasted foul.

Never think you can out-drink a Russian.

"Still bad, huh?" Russia came into the room, eating from a bowl. He looked amusingly at America, who looked absolutely miserable. Russia may not remember a lot of last night, especially the party, but he knew that America had helped him home. All he knows is from what his brother has told him.

"Norrrmally, it takes a lot of vodkas to do zat to someone. What else did you have?"

"Same as you, " America groaned, turning towards me. "Whatever Ireland made and a little less vodka than you."

Russia nodded, not remembering taking anything Ireland hand made himself. But, maybe that was a sign that he did. All he remembered was taking more vodka.

"Herrre." Russia held out a bowl of the food he was eating and motioned for America to take it. He looked at it curiously but took it anyways. He'd rather taste anything than what his mouth reeked of.

"It helps me whenever I get hangover." Russia sat down on the couch next to America. He absently nodded along as he eagerly ate from the bowl. Whatever it was, it wasn't his favorite but it was so much better then what his mouth already tasted like. It was kind of like oatmeal, actually. With a hint of honey.

"What is it?"

"Kasha." Russia sat back into the couch and closed his eyes. He was trying his best to remember what happened. He hadn't asked America yet since he was currently incapable of thinking. More than usual.

The beginning of the party, yes. Poland dragging Germany away, leaving Russia to earn twenty bucks for sure. Hanging out with America, Canada at one point, and Mexico. Yeah, that moment was weird. He had asked America about his brother and Ukraine. But that's where it got a little fuzzy. Maybe because he did take another bottle of vodka from Ireland when his own suddenly disappeared.

Russia shook his thoughts away and looked to America. He had almost completely devoured the bowl. He chuckled, finding that an amusing sight.

"What happened?"

America looked up, spoon in mouth. He made a confused sound and continued the bite he was in the middle of.

"Parrrty."

"Oh, " America swallowed his spoon full and set the bowl and spoon down on the coffee table in front of them. "Dude, you were gone. Like tripping over air gone."

"My blackout kould've told me zat." Russia raised a brow and subtly told him to give him something useful.

"Right. Right. Well, I tried to get you home and you ended up flirting with me."

"What?" Russia straightened out and looked to him confused and shocked. "What do you mean? I would never do such a zing."

"Yeah, well, you did." America looked away and cleared his throat. "You called me cute." He failed to mention the beginning reason why Russia had even started that. As if he wasn't completely flustered to how hot Russia looked without a shirt on.

"Vell I vould never say zat to a guy, much less you." Russia shot

back, clearly embarrassed with his cheeks warm. He wrapped his arms around himself tightly, as if to keep himself contained and others out.

"Aww, does Ruski think I'm cute?~" America teased, leaning forward with his chin on his hands. Russia pushed him away which had the other country laugh.

"What else happened?"

"Well, I got you home, you kept calling me 'nice country', and I was trying to get you to go to sleep. We somehow ended up doing shots instead, me doing way too many way too fast."

"Like idiot Amerrrikan you arrre." Russia poked fun at him and America just shook his head. Oh, he could make this so much worse.

"Yeah, well you found this idiot American cute, so..." He stretched out on the couch, draping himself over his lap. Honestly, it felt nice on his back, maybe he can prolong this just until he can crack it. "Maybe your not as straight as you think."

Russia looked at him furiously, heat almost radiating off of him. America stretched across his legs until he heard a crack and then he relaxed.

"Man, that felt good." He sighed and sat back up properly, this time crawling to the other side of Russia.

"Vas all of zat forrr crrracking yourrr back?" Russia was actually confused, and a little startled.

"Actually, yeah." He moaned and melted into the couch. God, that was what was mostly bothering him. Now it's just his headache. "Man, I respect your sexuality. But that won't stop me from messing with you."

Just then America's phone beeped. He checked it and frowned. Russia noticed his mood sift and asked, "What is it?"

"My Dad." He sighed and stood, wobbling a little bit. "He wants me

home now."

"You gonna be good?"

"Yes, I'll be fine."

Russia nodded but still was concerned. That cocky smile and relax state was suddenly replaced with a cold expression and monotone voice. Like he rehearsed the answer to that question countless times.

"You know, " he looked down at the ground and rubbed the back of his neck. "If something is up, and you ever need place to crrrash, you kan alvays stay herrre."

America looked at him, surprised by his sudden kindness and offer. He had expected a comment about how he should leave or something to that extent. That was a nice change.

"Thanks." America smiled brightly at Russia. His chest warmed up when he saw the smaller country smile at him so kindly. It was small moments like that, that reminded Russia that America wasn't all that self-absorbed. That he wasn't all bad.

When he got home, America dreaded the eventual meet with his dad. He sat on the couch, stomach-churning from both the alcohol and what his father was going to lecture him about. Hopefully, Canada didn't spill anything. He is known to be honest but was also known to be loyal. He wouldn't get America in trouble on purpose.

"Morning, dad." America greeted his father as he walked into the living room. He was dressed down, at least his father's version of being dressed down. Neat white dress shirt tucked into his navy blue dress pants. He had his hat off, his monocle on, and a small plate with a cup of tea in hand.

"Son." Was his greeting.

He sat down in his seat from across the couch, where America sat awkwardly. His slowly sipped his tea, eyes closed and enjoying himself. Oh no, he was in for it, America thought to himself.

"So." Britain set his cup down on the small plate. "Did you sneak out?"

"No," America answered nonchalantly.

"Why weren't you in your room this morning?"

"Cause I left this morning to go to Russia's house."

Britain nodded then took another sip. His calm demeanor unsettled America. He was waiting for his dad to shout, to do something. Of course, he hasn't done that in a while, but the expectation that he would was still there. Back when America was New England, Britain was always taking advantage of him. Taking what he had and leaving him with so little. He's changed a lot since then, but he just expects that to happen now.

"You've been spending a lot of time with Russia. Why?" Britain set his cup and saucer down on the small table between them. He had advised America not to associate with the country outside of doing their school project. As always, however, America did not listen. "You do remember his father, correct?"

"Yes, I do." America looked down at the ground. He knew his father still held a grudge. He was always good at doing that. But America wanted allies, friends. He didn't want a war, he was fearful of one. The Cold War with the USSR proved that. Another war now could mean the death of all of them.

"But he's not like his dad. Kids don't always turn out to be like their parents, you know." America crossed his arms and leaned back into the couch.

America, too, could hold a grudge just as well as his father. But he either didn't recognize it or didn't care.

"I know, son, " Britain looked to the big silver polished mirror that hung up on their wall. He looked at his reflection and to America's as well. If anyone knew how much that statement was true, it was him. "I know."

America huffed out and rubbed his eyes. His headache bothered

him, and the stress from this conversation was getting to him, too. Britain noticed his movements to his eyes. If one is quick enough, they can catch a small glimpse at his black eyes just before they are covered up again. He had an inkling that the reason America was hanging out with some bad countries was because of how he felt about those. He didn't always have them. When he was younger, he had pure white eyes just like everyone else. But then something changed. He became a much bigger country, and it was around then he woke up with them.

He once had those, Britain remembered. Back when he was constantly invading and reducing other countries to his slaves. He had the darkest eyes, seeming to be darker than the darkest shade known to anyone. Until he stopped colonizing.

That's what his family thought it was at first. Just something to do with colonizing. But, then he started puking up that mysterious black liquid and spoke in different languages no one recognized. Britain didn't have that.

"America, son, " Britain picked up his empty teacup and saucer and stood. America looked up at his father, preparing himself for a scolding. But it didn't happen. "Please inform us when you go out."

With that, he walked away. America watched him until he was gone. Then he let out a sigh of relief. He didn't think his dad knew about the party. If he did, he didn't seem to care. Maybe now he was starting to figure out that America is not going to listen.

"Ame?"

He turned around to see his brother Australia walking towards him. America stood and greeted him with a smile.

"Wassup, Aussie man?" He held up a hand for him fo high-five. Australia returned it happily and decided to ask about what he and their father were talking about later. He didn't want to ruin America's moment of happiness.

"I found thiies cool new animul in the woods tuh-die!" Australia took out his travel bag and opened it. It was a tan bag with many

pockets filled with trinkets, nets, notebooks, and maps. He went into the woods with it all the time, to try and find new animals.

"I theenk yah'll loike ih'." He looked up and saw America had dashed across the room. Their table that was used for holding board games was flipped on its side. America was peaking over it, clearly scared of what Australia was about to show him.

"Don't worry, I can see from here." He reassured him, before ducking back down to just show his covered eyes. Australia was used to this, seeing how the animals he finds aren't always safe.

"Thees one ine't too bahd." Australia pulled out a small cage.

"Yeah, that's what you said about that huge snake."

Australia rolled his eyes and held out the cage. Inside was a small fuzzy bunny looking animal. It looked around its small nose twitching. Seeing how innocent it looked, America stood and walked over.

"Aww, this one is cute." America cooed, bending down to look at the animal better. "It's like a little bunny."

"Oy'm cohlin theah spaecees Beelbees (Bilbies)." Australia scratched the animal's side, gently trying to pet its fur. "Oy couldn't foind a lawt of thaese guys, sao thiis one Oy'll hahve t' laeh' gao."

"Oh yes, the one you let go is the one that is less likely to kill us." America stood and watched the small creature twitch its ears towards sounds and shift in the cage.

Australia shrugged, holding up the cage to his eyes. He intensely examined it, looking at any fur patterns, it's facial shape, the color of its eyes. He was gonna take notes on this new animal for sure. That's what he did with every creature he caught. Examine, take notes, tag them so he could find out where it lived and get more information like that. Everyone had something that they liked to do. That was his.

"I'll be up in moy room skaetchin' eow a raeference image faw thiiies leettle guy, " He grabbed up his bag and swung it on his

shoulder. America nodded, half listening. He was busy looking at the color of the rabbit. "Cohl me whaen food is avileable."

After a few moments, America was left alone. He stood in place, looking at the area the cage had once been. It's fur. It's brown soft fur. Just like that soft brown sweater Russia was wearing that morning.

America blinked as the thought came to mind. He looked at a bunny and he somehow connected it to Russia? Man, maybe he was spending a lot of time with him. Well, it's not like he could stop though. Russia was a pretty cool guy to hang with, surprisingly. Plus with what happened last night, he couldn't look at him without remembering what happened. His swollen chest right in front him, his hand being set on it. The expression he wore, almost like he was actually interested in America. His thumb caressing his cheek as he said in a slurred, but flirtatious voice, something that America would never expect him to say. Russia went far with his drunken flirting. He wondered if he would've gone further.

A beep shook America from thought again. His last few thoughts surprised him, but he decided to ignore it. He fished his phone out of his pocket and checked it. Germany had sent him a text.

*Ger-man: We need to talk.*

**((Okay, just a mini authors note: Holy Shit! Over 10k reads? I published the first chapter about a month ago. I honestly didn't believe this book would get that far that fast.))**

**Yeah then it's gone just like that.**

**Thank you all my comrades!**
**Ësgöge'ae'!**
**~Galaxy**

# Answered Questions

**Narrator's POV**

Germany tapped his finger on the desk at a steady rhythmic pace. He watched the small speech bubble with the three dots as America wrote out his response. He couldn't stop thinking about it. Last night, he meant, with what had happened with Poland.

He didn't expect it, honestly, he was surprised and nervous as hell. He always hoped that America could somehow help him, but the jerk just laughed and gave him the worst advice ever: 'Get some.' Seriously, he needed more than that.

His phone vibrated when the text was sent through.

*Ame- Wassup man, you good?*

*Ger- Can you come over, I gotta talk to you.*

*Ame- Can't man, my Dad is gonna be on my case if I leave the house again today.*

*Ame- Can you come here?*

*Ger- Yeah, I'll be over in a few.*

Germany grabbed his phone and turned off his music that was playing from an old radio. In a rush, he grabbed his jacket, left, and locked the empty house. He hated how quiet it would get sometimes. He could hear the echos of the past so clearly when everything was silent. On a quiet night, he swears he could hear the footsteps of his father in his locked study. That's why he is always playing music when he is home. The past has ghosts that are loud to him.

Germany shivered as the cold air snuck under his jacket before he could button up. It was getting noticeably colder now, the sky darkened with storm clouds. Leaves had started to fall off the trees

weeks ago, and now they mostly covered the ground. Germany was fond of the colors of this season, finding them comforting. They matched him, almost. But they reminded him of someone else, too. When he wasn't the only child his father had.

America was in his room scrolling through social media, waiting for his friend. He coughed lightly before turning back to his screen. Crap, hopefully, he wasn't getting a cold.
He felt something running down his hand and he casually glanced to see what it was.

The black liquid.

America jumped up off his bed, accidentally knocking his phone onto the floor. It skidded under his desk, stopping from the pile of dirty clothes that America had procrastinated taking care of.

He looked at his hands, anxiety-causing them to shake. Breathing started to become harder, his throat closing up. No, he can't have this now! Germany was coming over!

"I gotta tell him not to come here!" America panicked to himself, relieved he could still speak English. He scrambled to grab his phone off the floor, almost hitting his head on the underside of the desk. He first saw the screen was cracked, and he cursed to himself about it. But when he noticed that it was black with the loading screen, he almost screamed in frustration. Of course, the thing had to restart!

No one was really on the streets, at least not the countries Germany knew. Some families walked by, dressed appropriately for the changing season. He couldn't wait for Halloween. He started celebrating the holiday recently, and he was warming up to it quite well. Mostly due to America always dragging him along.

Still, he had a tendency to always go the extra mile in being the scariest. Go big, or go home. And like a switch, he remembered when Poland said that exact thing. The night prior, as he looked down at him with lustful eyes.

In America's room, music was playing loudly through his speakers.

He was trying to drown out the noise that came from his frustrated yelling. Papers were flung around, crumpled up notes, broken shards of mirror glass leaving a trail from the bathroom. His phone was on his desk, still a loading screen.

"Ha'át'íísh biniinaa! (Why!)" He punched the wall, breaking through the drywall and leaving a hole. He had already torn off his glasses and threw them on to his bed, so he couldn't break them. That left his eyes to be seen. And when he saw them, he punched the mirror.

America hissed at the pain in his fist and he clutched his wrists to try and cut off the burning pain. "Gaahhh, " he groaned and fell to the floor wishing he hadn't done that. His fist was already bleeding from when he punched the mirror.

Germany walked up to the front door of Britain's house and knocked politely. He straightened out his shirt, out of habit, and subconsciously touched his teeth. Still dull.

France opened the door and smiled at the boy. "Oh, Bonjour Mr. Germahny. Eet's very nice to see you!"

"Zank you, Mrs. Ahh, Merci." Germany nodded and bowed slightly, stepping into the house. He heard music playing from upstairs and recognized it immediately as America's.

"I'm sure you know where Ahmereeca ees, no?" France chuckled looking up at the ceiling, where the music's epicenter was. Germany nodded and walked up the stairs, making sure to say thank you again. On his way up, his mind wandered to the previous night. He quickly cleared his throat and tried to calm down his now very noticeable blush.

He stopped outside of America's room and knocked. A loud bang hit the wall next to the door and he heard America's voice shout. He must've not have heard him knock. Feeling slightly guilty, he grabbed his doorknob and tried to open it. But it didn't work. He must've locked it.

"Oh helloi, Germany."

Germany turned and saw New Zealand walking towards him. Germany waved slightly and took a step away from America's door.

"Hi, uh, " he cleared his throat, "can vu, can vu help me get into America's room. He told me to come offer put I don't zink he knew he locked me out."

New Zealand nodded, chuckling softly, and reached into his pocket. He had a spare key for America's room without his knowledge so he could sneak some stuff out and back in undetected.

"You were at that party right?" New Zealand asked as he put the key in the lock and twisted it open.

Germany nodded.

"I thought so. Japan said you snuck off with Poland. Then you two didn't come back for a while." He put the key back in his pocket and raise a brow at Germany. He nodded slowly and rubbed the back of his head, blood rushing to his cheeks and the back of his neck.

His obvious blushing was the answer to New Zealand's next unspoken question. He nodded with a smirk, knowing exactly what happened.

"Zank vu, New Sealand." Germany rushed out his sentence to divert from the topic that was still up in the air. New Zealand nodded his head as a silent welcome and continued on his way down the hall.

Germany waited for a second for his blush to go away before he opened the door and walked in.

America heard the door click shut and he froze in place. The music around him faded out of existence as he felt the presence of someone standing behind him. He was sat on the floor, legs up against his chest, arms cradling himself, tears pouring down his cheeks. He knew his room was a mess, looking like the room of a crazy person. And somehow he knew that Germany was the one behind him.

And he was. Staring down at the country with widened eyes. All previous thoughts were completely forgotten, covered up by what

he saw in front of him. A shaking country with knuckles visibly bleeding, holes in the walls, glass scattered in pieces everywhere, papers thrown about.

"Ame?" Germany nervously asked, taking a small step towards him and reaching out slowly to grab his shoulder.

"Dooda." America shook his head no.
"Vat?"

"T'áadoo shaa nánit'ini! (Leave me alone!)" America shouted at the top of his lungs, whipping his head around to face Germany.

He jumped back, startled by America's loud and sharp tone. Then he saw them. His eyes. His pitch-black eyes.

"Ame-Amer-Amer-A....." Germany started walking backward, unable to form a sentence. He tripped over his feet and landed on his back, sitting right back up to crawl away.

America froze, eyes widening at the realization of what he had just done. He covered his eyes with his arm and quickly turned away. Loud sobs came from him as he cried harder. How could he be so stupid! He's kept this to himself, just in the family for so long and now he screws it up! And to top it off, he yelled at Germany. Scared him! Terrified him!

Germany gulped, chest rising at a steady and fast pace. Tears stung the corners of his eyes, threatening to fall. His arms shook, fingertips tightly grasping discarded lined paper.

"Ame?"

"T'áá shoodí, t'áadoo shaa nánit'in. (Please, leave me alone.)" America gasped between sobs. He stood up and climbed onto his bed, hiding himself away in the corner of the room. "T'áá shoodí. (Please.)"

Germany didn't understand what he said. But he heard the pain in his voice. He read his body language. He was scared, hurt, and trying to be invisible. And if America wants to be invisible, something is very wrong.

Shakily, he stood up and started walking over to his friend. Before he got there, he shut off the speakers that were still blaring music. As soon as that sound was gone, he could hear America's quiet sobs.

"America? Is it okay if I come clozer?" Germany nervously asked, standing by the side of his bed.

He shook his head no.

Germany nodded to himself and sat on the edge of the bed. "Do vu vant to talk apout it?"

A head shake no.

"Okay, " Germany looked around America's room, "Is zere hanything I can get vu?"

America nodded, opened his mouth to speak but quickly shut it. Germany wouldn't understand him. He closed his eyes and turned around. Using his hands he drew out the shape of his sunglasses around his eyes. Germany understood and looked around for them, spotting them on the bed next to them.

He placed them in his hand and he quickly put them on. America blinked, opening up his eyes and sighing in relief when he knew they were covered.

He made the motion for writing something down and Germany grabbed him a notebook and a pencil.

'Ádzaaígíí bąąh shíni' (I'm sorry),' He wrote down in the notebook. It took him a moment to realize it wasn't in English and in frustration he threw the book across the room. Germany looked at America's knuckles and winced when he saw how bad they looked.

"I'm koing to get vu zome pandages or zomething. Zey are in zee kitchen right?" Germany asked, standing up and looking at America for guidance. He pointed to his bathroom and Germany nodded.

After a few long quiet minutes, America had his wounds cleaned and bandaged. Germany helped tidy up his room, always wanting to do that since America's room was always a mess. As he did that,

America watched him as he quietly mumbled words to himself. To see when he'd start speaking English again. So far, he wasn't.

"Is zere hanything elze?" Germany asked, throwing away the last of the wipes he used to clean that black mess from America's sink.

America thought to himself. He could use hand signals to try and talk to him, like a mime. He wasn't sure if Germany knew full sign, at least ASL. His mom was great at interpreting things like that. She can talk to her kids and tell what they are saying, even when they are speaking both ASL's or, NZSL, or just doing charades. But America wanted to ask Germany what had happened at the party, not something he wanted to involve his mom with. It was a way to distract himself from what was happening. And to see if he won the bet.

America quickly jumped off the bed and grabbed his family picture off his desk. He pointed to Canada and made the 'come here' sign with his hand. Germany nodded, and went to get his brother for him.

After a few minutes, Canada ran into America's room, nearly kicking down the door. America jumped, clutching his blankets in surprise. He had been waiting on his bed, and the sudden commotion scared the living shit out of him.

"Oh, Ame!" Canada ran and engulfed him in a tight hug. America squirmed to get out of it but knew he couldn't. Germany stood to the side, watching the two. He felt bad, not knowing what to do. And he came over to talk to him about some stuff when really it was America who needed to talk.

"Can you tell Germany I want to talk to him about what happened at the party?" America signed to Canada when he was able to be let go. His brother nodded and repeated what America told him to Germany.

"Vu know vat zat means?" Germany made similar hand motions America had done. "Und vy do vu vant to talk apout zee um, zee um, the barty?"

"I know ASL, which is American Sign Language. That's what he's using." Canada explained, and Germany nodded in understanding.

America signed his response to Germany's question and Canada spoke it as he signed it, "Uhh, what happened with Poland?"

"Nothing!" He quickly responded, on the verge of freaking out. America pointed to his own neck, tapping the skin to tell Germany that he had something on his neck.

Germany squeaked and covered his exposed neck, knowing very well that his love bite from Poland was visible. He had adjusted his shirt collar so he could hide it, but he would have to keep adjusting it to make sure it stays hidden. And he forgot all about it until now.

America laughed, knowing exactly why Germany was so flustered. He'd pay Russia later, now he just had one important question left.

"Where you top, " Canada translated America's question before interjecting with one of his own. "Wait, America, what is this about? What exactly are you having me ask?"

America signed something to him and Canada's eyes went wide and his mouth fell ajar. He looked to Germany shocked with red covering his cheeks. "I can't ask about that!" Canada exclaimed loudly, making Germany jump sightly. He looked super embarrassed about whatever it was.

"Can you try, you should be able to speak by now." Canada shoved his brother away, hiding his embarrassed face in his jacket sleeve. "I-I-I can't do that, nope!"

"Doo bik'i'dooshtiih da? (You don't understand?)" America asked, but they didn't need to answer. He sighed and tried again. "Haa. Baa. (How. About.) Now? Hey look, I can speak English!"

"Zo, vat vere vu trying to ask me?" Germany pushed up his glasses and looked to America. He'd ask about everything that just happened later. Because he knew that America would not answer any questions now. Not directly after. It was frustrating, but Germany understood.

"Oh, so my man, " America leaned forward and raised a brow, "you topped right?"

"Vat?!" Germany became flustered again, swallowing a huge lump in his throat.

"Yeah, I'm gone." Canada spun on his heels and hurried to the door. He knew very well that he was not the most innocent person, and could handle talks like that, but he'd rather not.

"Uhh, acdually, n-nein, nein, I didn't." Germany tugged on his tie trying to loosen it so he could breathe. "Vy?"

"What do you mean no? What have I taught you?" America put his hands on his hips and took on a dramatic voice.

"Nothing!" Germany strained his voice to keep from shouting. But he really wanted to. "Pezites, (Besides)" he rubbed his neck, " I kinda liked it zat way."

"Awww, the innocent Ger-man isn't so innocent anymore."

"Sch-sch-schut up." Germany hid his face in his hands causing America to laugh again. His stomach hurt from earlier and now from the strain of laughing.

He could handle it, as long as it kept Germany from asking what that was all about.

Germany looked at him, seeing how he funny he thought he was. He could totally turn the tables so easily, but he wasn't so sure if he should right now.

"America, I'm koing to get vu pack for zis," Germany grumbled, narrowing his eyes. America just chuckled, sensing no threat what so ever from him.

But he should have.

**((To everyone that was asking, it was a yes. America did lose twenty bucks.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Planning Revenge

[image] [image]

**America's POV**

"Yo, Russia." I pulled out my wallet and handed him the bet money. "Germany and Poland fucked, so here's your twenty bucks."

"Told you." He smugly took my money, a prideful smile plastered over his dumb face. When you gave him the chance, he can boast like nobodies business.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You were right, and I was wrong, " I rolled my eyes, annoyed that our roles of the smug one and the tolerating one were switched. "You got our project ready? We gotta turn it in today."

Russia nodded, slipping off his beat-up bag and took out a folder. I took it and opened it, making sure everything was in there.

"Cool. Turn it in, present a little, then ba da bing, ba da boom!" I handed him back his folder and did jaz hands for effect. "Defiantly a C or a D or something."

"Vooow, yourrr expectations arrre low."

"Eh, I'm just realistic." I shrugged as we walked to school. Today was gonna be just another school day since nothing special was planned. I was gonna catch up with Ireland again, but he canceled on me. Said something came up.

"You got anything going on after school, Ruski?" I turned to him, looking up to catch his line of sight. He shook his head no, the little flaps of his hat waving slightly. They were like long floppy puppy dog ears.

"Nothing. And if I did, vouldn't you just tag along?" He nudged my arm playfully. I smiled, still proud that he now takes movements

like that as jokes and not an invitation to fight. I always wondered why he did that, and just assumed it was a trauma thing. But then Russia told him that his dad never hit him. His dad seemed scary and did hurt other countries, but he had never laid a hand on them. Learning that surprised me, but I could understand how looks can be deceiving.

"You right, you right." I nodded my head and stuffed my hands in my pockets. The cold air had started to make the tips of my fingers cold. Today was a rather chilly day. And Russia was just in a thin sweater, the cold weather never affecting him as much. That well-adjusted bastard.

"Amerrrica?"

"Yeah, dude?"

"Why do you alvays vearrr sunglasses?"

I almost tripped over my feet. Russia caught me and spun me to look up at him. He had the facial expression of boredom, like what he asked didn't matter much to him, but in his eyes and the way his brows were slightly furrowed, I could tell he wanted an answer. The real answer. But I knew I couldn't give him it.

"Uhhh, why not? I think they are cool." I forced myself from his grasp and tried to play it off as nothing. But with the speed and urgency, I used to pull myself from him didn't do anything in my favor to convince him.

"Even as you sleep?" Russia raised a brow and I huffed. Why was he suddenly so interested?

"Yes, even as I sleep. I thought we established by now I'm a weird country."

We walked through the gates of the school and I tried to spot someone that could help me change the subject. Uhh, Germany? I don't see him.

"But you koverrred yourrr eyes when you had zem off. Rrremember when I kalled you drrrunk?"

"Uhhh, I have sensitive eyes." I don't see any countries that would strike up a conversation with me just because. Wait, Japan!

"Hey, Japan!" I called to her, waving my arm.

She turned her head and her ears perked up when she saw us. Her brother stood next to her, obviously ticked she was pulled from their conversation. But when he noticed it was me that called her attention, he scowled and marched off.

Hinode (Sunrise) never liked me. And I couldn't blame him. He was one to always focus on the past, learn from its lessons and whatever, and wanted to be more traditional. Which meant he never forgot what happened to his mom. Which means he never forgave.
But he forgets, or rather ignores, that I never wanted to be involved. I isolated myself from it, as much as I could. I never wanted to take part in that stupid war. And his mom had attacked me first.

"おはようございます (Hello, good morning) America and Russia!" Japan greeted me, a bounce in her step. Japan I liked. She was eccentric, always having interesting books and stories to show me. And, not going to lie, she was once a crush. Japan is very attractive and didn't help that she wore such small skirts, but I never did anything about it. One, I didn't like her that way for long, and her brother would've actually murdered me. Like, not even joking, that dude is scary.

"доброе утро, (Good Morning) " Russia smiled at Japan. No doubt he was still thinking that she was stalking us. I didn't care, I just knew she'd distract Russia from my eyes.

"You guys have been hanging out a lot, I've noticed." Japan walked next to me, which I figured it would've been better if she stood between me and Russia. So she can talk to us both. Oh well.

"Yeah, so?" Russia raised a brow.

"What, are you two like dating or something?"

"Niet!" Russia jumped, his train of thought now for sure derailed.

"Yes." I grabbed his hand and felt him tense up more. I put on a serious face, trying very hard not to break out laughing. "Ever since the party, Russia has been mine and no one else's."

Japan smiled so wide and I couldn't tell if she knew I was joking or not. Either way, Russia's reaction was hilarious.

"What, niet, niet I'm not!" Russia leaned away from me. But he didn't let go of my hand. Suddenly I was thrown back to the night when he grabbed my hand and set it on his chest. Oh good God, not right now brain, not right now.

"Don't you remember babe?" I turned to face him and leaned forward, ignoring the burning feeling in my chest. "I asked you out and you said yes?"

Japan tilted her head confused and then a face of realization appeared. What she just figured out was beyond me, maybe that I wasn't actually serious.

"Niet, I didn't!" Russia persisted, now visibly flustered.

I held back a laugh before straining to say, "I know." Then I busted out laughing.

Russia's face fell then he slapped me upside my head. It wasn't hard, so I didn't really flinch.

"Well, if you two aren't dating then why are you holding hands?" Japan stuck out her hip and pointed at our interlocked hands. I tore my hand free and waved it off.

"Because my hand was cold." I wasn't really lying, my hand was kind of cold. And Russia's hand was nice and warm. Plus, bigger than mine, too. If he could, he could probably encase my entire hand with his.

"Well, if you where, you'd be cute together." Japan winked at me, and I knew she wasn't joking. I looked at Russia and seen he just turned his head away. My cheeks grew slightly red at that thought, but I shook my head to focus myself.

"Yeah, I could say the same about you and S.K." I shot back at her.

Japan's ears lowered in embarrassment and her smug stance dissolved. She held her face in her hands and the red blush that encased her face greatly contrasted with her skin. It was hilarious.

"Yeah, that's what I thought."

She peeked through her fingers and slightly muffled, she threatened, "I'll get you back for that."

Then the bell rang and we had to get to class. Japan smiled at me, as nothing had just happened, and skipped away into the school. I gave Russia a weird look and he just shrugged. Not knowing what else to do, we walked into the school to go to our class. Russia stayed a little bit away from me, and I did the same. Even though I really wanted the warmth of his hand back.

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**((Switchin' up a bit))**

**Germany's POV**

I held Poland's hand as we walked to his house after school. We were gonna hang out and watch TV together. But then I got a text from Japan.

*Japan- Hey, I just got an amazing idea, that may be based around revenge for what America said to me earlier.*

I showed Poland my screen and he read the massage as I typed out my response.

*Ger- Why do I get a bad feeling whenever you say that?*

"I get a good feeling, " Poland argued back, smiling at me. I rolled my eyes, knowing he can be just as eccentric as Japan. But he's more reserved with it. And besides, I mean, I did want to get back at America for teasing me yesterday, too. But Japan's plans have a history of being worrisome.
~~~~~~

*Japan- I don't know. And if you don't go along with it, I'll blackmail you.*

*Ger- You know you don't have to do that. What is the plan?*

*Japan- Right, sorry. Not used to people willingly helping me with my yaoi plans.*

Poland tilted my screen so he could read the massage then let go. We turned down his street and I knew we'd be out of the chilly air in a little bit.

*Japan- We have to somehow get Russia and America over to one of our houses, and we lock them in a tight space. Like a closet, or if we can manage, a smaller place.*

"Wow, she's getting bolder," Poland commented and I nodded with him. "But it does seem like a good idea."

"Put, doesn't it zeem hextreme?" I rubbed the back of my neck and Poland tilted his head. "I mean, I don't vant zem to get angry."

"Oh, it'll be fine." Poland squeezed my hand for reassurance. "Please tell her we'll go along with the plan."

I hesitated, but before I could fully respond, Poland grabbed my cheek and kissed me on my lips. We stopped walking for a second and I was caught off guard, but quickly melted into his embrace. He pulled me closer to him, slightly biting my lip.

I never expected Poland to be rough in the slightest. And I never expected to love it so much. But none the less, when he pulled away I stumbled forward and it took me a moment to regain my composure. Poland looked at me with hungry eyes, satisfied with his work.
Clearing my throat, I fixed my glasses and sent a response to Japan.

*Ger- Okay, they won't suspect my house. And I know a place for it. We'll all get together this weekend, then.*

*Japan- That'll be perfect. Can I invite someone else, too? To make it seem less suspicious?*

Poland nodded so I sent a text agreeing to her request.

"Hey." He caught my attention again. "What was she gonna blackmail us with?"

I shrugged and sent a text.

G*er- What we're you going to blackmail us with?*

*Japan- Oh right! I took this beauty at the party.*

My eyes widened and my heart raced when I saw the image. Very detailed memories popped into my head and I buried my face in my hand from embarrassment. I could almost feel Poland's warm breath back on my skin, his firm hold on my hands, the feeling of his-

"How did she get that?" Poland looked at my screen, his face growing red, too. "And tell her to send it to me."

"Vat, vy?" I looked up at him and he shrugged.

"Because it's a good picture of you." He teased me and I looked away blushing. He knew he could do that easily to me, and he takes advantage of it. Not that I hated it.

*Japan- Yeah, that's not all I got.* 😉

"Oh, Kott nein. I can't- vu talk to her, I- uhhh." I held my phone for Poland to take and he calmly took it and typed out his response to Japan. But instead of giving me my phone, he put it in his pocket.

That's when I noticed we were in front of his house. I momentarily forgot about what Japan had said as Poland lead me up his steps. He stopped me in front of his door, and before I could say or do anything, he kissed my cheek. I smiled warmly, loving his random embraces. But when he moved to face me, I recognize the look in his eyes. It was the same look he had at the party.

"Uhhh, hehe, " was all I managed out with some nervous laughter. My palms started to get sweaty be my body warmed up, feeling like there was a heater in my jacket.

"Ve're not vatching TFF (TV), are ve?" I asked as Poland opened the door. He pushed it open, a warm welcoming house greeting us with open arms.

"Well, the TV can be on." He lead me inside, letting go of my hand so we can take off our jackets and shoes, and so he can close the door. Poland helped take mine off and hung it up on the coat rack by the door.

I walked into the living room, but as soon as I stepped one foot onto the carpet, my hand was grabbed and I was spun around. Poland held my waist, holding me up against his body and held my hand up, level with my head.

"How about I show you my room?" He spoke in a soft quiet voice and I swallowed hard. Blush covered my cheeks, reding my face noticeably no doubt. Knowing very well, my voice was as good as dead, I nodded.

Poland smiled sweetly at me, kissed my hand, and lead me down the hall to his room. I silently followed him, trying to regain my logical thought process. But all I could think about was what was going to happen as soon as I go through his bedroom door.

((**And cut, cause I'm evil. Or am I? I dunno, do you guys wanna know what happened behind that door?**

**Comment what you want, comrades. And keep doing it, because they are hilarious to read.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Top Poland is Best Poland (Smut)

***Smut Warning***

**For 16-18+-year-olds, please. Kiddos, look away.**

**Narrator's POV**

Poland opened his bedroom door and lead Germany inside. He shut the door and smiled when he turned around to see Germany sitting on the edge of the bed. The poor boy was already blushing furiously, Poland noted, nervous no doubt. It was adorable. His hands were neatly folded across his lap, his posture straight like he was at a formal event. Not at his boyfriends house.

"We don't have to if you don't want to." Poland walked over to him, setting his hands on Germany's tense shoulders.

He looked up at his lover and excitedly exclaimed, "Nein, I vant to!" As soon as he did so, he looked down in embarrassment from his eagerness. He quickly redid his sentence in a calmer voice, "I mean, I-I'd like to."

Poland smirked, finding that small outburst cute.

"Good." He hummed, sliding his hands down Germany's side. Germany relaxed at his touch, letting out a long sigh. He was always so worried about everything, and Poland had the ability to ease that down significantly.

Germany wrapped his arms around Poland's neck, bringing him in close for a kiss. They connected their lips, Poland letting Germany lead for this small bit. He lightly bit his bottom lip, and Poland complied with opening his mouth. He slipped his tongue inside, exploring the wet crevice.

Poland slowly pushed himself against Germany, lowering him onto the bed. Their tongues danced together, and when Poland pulled away, a thin trail of saliva connected their mouths. Germany panted slightly, cheeks warmed from the heated kiss.

They moved up further onto the bed, where Poland climbed onto it and hovered over his boyfriend. Germany laid below him, heart racing, completely submissive to the polish country above him. He wanted nothing but his touch right now.

Now that they were in a warmer, and honestly more comfortable, place, Poland figured it would be okay to lose more clothing. He set himself down on top of Germany, sitting upright, and began to undo his tie. He knew tying ties was hard, but getting them off was relatively easy. And once it was undone, he tossed it onto the pillow next to them and worked on unbuttoning his shirt.

Germany felt his breathing increase as he helped take off his shirt. He looked away, towards the wall when Poland ran his hands over his bare chest. On it, he knew he had scars that where very obvious and hard to miss. It was from the past, when the fighting and horror of war affected him, too.

But Poland didn't say anything. Instead, he took off his thin sweater and his shirt to reveal more scars around his body, too. But their numbers greatly contrasted the amount Germany had. And he needn't ask where they came from. He knew, knew all about it. Germany ran his hand over one that went across his entire chest, knowing that it must've hurt so much then. A twinge of guilt hit his stomach and he frowned sorrowfully at the sight.

Poland noticed it and decided it would be best if he didn't show Germany his back right then and there. Or else he'd feel so much worse. So, instead, Poland set his hand on Germany's cheek and tilted his head to look up at him.

"We are all wounded from the past, which means, we are all capable in helping each other heal." He caressed his face and his lover shut his eyes, rubbing against his comforting hold. "I can help you heal, as much as you can help me."

Poland connected their lips again, softly pecking them until he felt that worried frown leave. Then he moved down to his neck, leaving small butterfly kisses along the way. Germany lifted his head, giving Poland more access.

He kissed the warm skin, paying attention to Germany's movements. When he reached a certain spot, Germany gasped slightly. Poland smiled and started to suck at the skin before he added bites to his actions. The heavy breathing that came next to him hitched and was followed by a suppressed moan. He could feel Germany start to squirm under him. Arms wrapped around his neck and Poland got scared for a moment that Germany might accidentally grab at the leftover stubs from his wings.

He lifted himself up slightly, enough to look at Germany in the eyes. He was panting slightly, mouth open, and looking up at him eager. The sight of him bellow him like that increased the heat he felt in his groin and started to make his pants feel tight.

Poland grabbed Germany's hands and put them above his head. He looked at him confused, but didn't protest when Poland tied his hands together and to the bed's headboard with his black tie. Germany thought nothing of the restraint, actually, it was turning him on, but Poland did it to make sure he didn't find out about his broken wings. Ease into the trauma stuff.

Germany watched as Poland, set his hands down on his chest, rubbing his hands over his nipples before slowly sliding down his sides. He bit his lower lip, butterflies fluttering vigorously around in his stomach, as Poland gripped the sides of his pants and started to pull them off. When he was left in nothing else but his briefs, a clear erection showing, Poland kissed his stomach. He slowly made his way down until he reached the fabric of his underwear. That didn't stop him, though.

Poland pulled down the last article of clothing, trailing his tongue down until he reached the base of Germany's shaft. He felt the boy shiver and let out a quiet moan as he traced his length with his tongue.

"Boland~" Germany curled his wrists, wanting to grab ahold of

something. But he couldn't, so instead he watched as Poland licked the tip of his dick, creating teasing circles before slowly lowering his mouth. Electricity shot through his spine when Poland picked up speed, bobbing his head up and down.

"Bitte schneller... (Please, faster...)" He pleaded, thrusting his hips up as Poland deep throated him. Whether he understood his words or not, Poland picked up speed. Germany's eyes shut tight, and he rolled his head back in pleasure. He didn't hold back his moan then.

Poland could feel his erection growing at Germany's moans. It pressed against his pants, almost painful, begging for release. He needed to feel it inside Germany now, he couldn't wait any longer.

Much to Germany's confusion, the heat that had started to build up in him was suddenly halted. He waited a second before peaking open his eyes, peering up to see what had stopped Poland's movements. He turned his head fully when he noticed that Poland had slipped off his pants and underwear. They were discarded to the side by the bed.

Poland licked his fingers building up saliva on them, then placed one at Germany's entrance. Teasingly, he made small circles around the sensitive skin, trying to get a rise out of him. It worked, Germany whined and shuddered from the light touches. Without question, he slipped it in and started pumping his hand in and out. Germany jumped slightly, but let out a small moan. He couldn't stand to wait, and he couldn't even figure out how Poland kept himself together. He needs to feel what he had once did at that party. In the woods, it was so cold but the heat from both of them warmed them enough.

"Boland, bleaze."

He looked up Germany when he heard his name. A strong red hue was on his face, his mouth agape and eyes half lidded. His wrists were trying to move as much as they could. He shifted his hips, in a desperate attempt to grind against his hand.

"Bleaze, I can't vait any longer."
Poland nodded and slipped out his fingers. He lifted up Germany so

he was suspended in the air a little, the backs of his knees resting on his shoulders. He grabbed his own dick, dripping with precum, and lined it up at the german's hole.

"You really need to be more patient." Poland smiled, a sign to show he wasn't being serious. Then he thrusted his hips forward, slamming into Germany hard. Germany gasped loudly, turning it into a moan as he arched his back. For Poland, the sheer relief of feeling his tight walls around him was enough to make him moan loudly and shake. Tears formed in his eyes, but Germany quickly blinked those away. His pleasure greatly contrasted the fading pain.

Poland gave Germany time to adjust, but couldn't hold back much longer. He started thrusting in and out of him quickly, causing Germany to squirm under him.

"Ahhhh~ Polen, mach langsamer! (Poland, slow down!)" Germany moaned, not realizing he wasn't speaking English. "Nein, nein, nein, hör nicht auf! (No, no, no, don't stop!)"

Poland, half understanding what he said, took it as him telling him to speed up.

They both moaned, Germany crying out the loudest. His toes curled as they were suspended in the air. With every thrust, Poland went deeper in, hitting Germany's prostate. Waves of heat went through his body as he felt that familiar burning sensation start to knot up.

Poland huffed out sharply, trying to keep up his speed and maintain his stance as pleasure pulsated from his groin. He bent over Germany, letting one of his legs go in the process.

"Ahhh, Ger, " Poland moaned, using his free hand to start jerking Germany off. That sent hot sparks through his partner, turning into a loud moan.

"Poland, Pol! I-I'm close!" Germany looked up with desperate eyes, curling his legs around his partner. It slightly hindered Poland's movements but caused him to hit the right spot again. He was almost seeing stars by now, from the overstimulation he was getting so quickly. The in-sync rhythm of Poland's hand gliding up and

down Germany's shaft, while also him pounding into his ass.

Poland felt his dick twitch, release coming close. "Me, too, oh God!" He was just thinking about pulling out right before he released. With no time for any other action, Poland called out, "Germany!"

His warm seed filled Germany to the brim, the white substance splattering out.

A few seconds after, Germany came. The feeling of warm liquid being rushed into him was what sent him over the edge. "Poland~!" Germany mixed his name in with a moan, releasing into Poland's hand. Cum had landed on his chest, which was now rising up and down fast from his heavy breathing.

Poland pulled out, Germany weakly moaning from the movement on his sensitive hole. His seed dripped out onto the bed, running down his bare yellow skin.

After Poland got themselves cleaned up, he untied Germany. He was allowing him to get his strength back since the poor boy looked so drained. It was honestly just as adorable as when he was sitting nervously on the edge of the bed.

"Zank vu, der Liebling. (Love)" Germany hummed with a smile. He was curled up on the bed, under the covers still naked. He didn't mind since he was now too lazy to get dressed.

"No need to thank me." Poland slipped under the covers with him and kissed his cheek. "It was my pleasure, too."

He wrapped his arms around his waist and held him close. Germany smiled in comfort, happy to fall asleep in the arms of someone who loved him. Likewise, Poland was happy to hold someone who loved him close to himself. For both of them, each time they had something they loved, it was torn away. Holding each other close was almost therapeutic.

They laid curled up together until sleep claimed them both.

There was still some daylight out, but they both didn't care. They had no one else coming over that day, to their knowledge. And if

they did, someone would have gotten a text message.

But Poland did get the message. In his phone, an unread text waited for him in his discarded pants pocket. It was from Russia, saying he would be coming over in a few minutes.

Russia did come over.

Unfortunately, when he did, he had casually strolled into Poland's house as he did countless other times. But, house was quiet. Which means he heard things. Things he never wanted to hear, not from two of his close friends. That caused Russia to stiffly walk out the front door and right back to his home. He needed to immediately cleanse his mind of those sounds.

Preferably with vodka.

**There you have your Boland Bleaze back. Don't make me regret it xD**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Drunk Russia

**Russia's POV**

"Nyet, I'm potato, I belong herrre!"

"No, Russia, you don't so stop it."

"Nyet!" I dug my hands into the ground, refusing to leave my rightful place. If Belarus says I'm a potato, then a potato I will be!

"No, let him be!" I heard Belarus laugh from somewhere around me. Her voice swayed but I understood.

"No, we can't. He has company coming over, and we can't have him like this!" Ukraine yelled from above me. Her voice was loud, but her tone was like she was talking. She was loud talking.

"I who I!" I argued back, trying to swat her hand away. I missed and my hand betrayed me, hitting my own head.

"Stupid trrraitorrrous hand!"

"Russia, why did you have to go get drunk!" Ukraine scolded me and I laughed. Her voice sounded funny, it was hilarious. "And how darree she assume I'm drrrunk, I'm kompletely and perrrfectly sober!"

"You are not sober!"

"Crrrap, she kan rrread minds."

"Russia, your talking out-oh my!"

Ukraine dropped my foot down back on the ground. Yes! Now I can go back to being one with the earth. "That American is coming over, so give me the bottle!"

"Nyet! Zis helps me grrrow. I need to vater myself!" I hugged my

watering can to my chest. It was a strange watering can, looking much like my bottles of vodka.

"Russia?" Belarus crouched down next to me, hands on her knees. I looked up at her and whined.

"Can I have the bottle please?" She held out her hand, urging me to give it to her. She did know more about potatoes than I did. She'll know how to take care of me.

"Okay." I handed it to her.

"Unbelievable." Ukraine grabbed the bottle from Belarus and stomped off. Her angered stomping shook the earth, affecting my roots.

"Potato sad." I whimpered looking up at Belarus. She patted my head and smiled, trying to cheer me up.

"I have many questions."

I looked up and saw America walking up to us. He had his jacket on with a USA flag patched on the chest pocket.

"Nice kountrrry!" I sat up slightly, not being able to move from my planted spot. "I'm potato!"

America looked to my sister, gestured to me and she said something about my vodkas. I couldn't focus on her words too much, but I understood it somewhat.

"Come on, let's get you inside then potato." America held out his hand. I didn't know what he wanted so I set my chin on his hand.

"Close enough, Ruski."

"Hehe. I'm Ruski." I grabbed his hand and pulled it to my cheek. "Mine."

"Uhh, that's my hand." America tried to pull away but I didn't let him. He grunted as he tried some more but I didn't let him move.

"My hand." I pulled it closer to me and he feel down on the ground. I laughed but held his hand close to my chest. As far as I can remember, he liked my chest. And I liked his hand. It was warm.

"I'll leave you with the potato." Belarus patted America's head and went back inside.

"Nyeeeeet.... She's garrrdener. Imma die...." I watched her disappear into the house. I don't have my water can, i don't have my potato girl. Imma wither and die.

"Russia, are you crying?"

"Noooo." I sniffed and put my face down into the dirt. "I'm just kondensation."

"That's not how that works." I heard Nice Kountrrry sigh. He tugged on his hand again, trying to lift himself up off the ground. "Come on man, get up. Lets get inside."

I groaned.

"Russia...."

"In not Rrrussia." I grumbled, turning my head slightly so i couldn't eat the dirt when I talked.

"Potato?"

"Nyet."

".....Ruski?"

"Yay!" I sat up, still holding onto his hand. He grunted as he was forced forward, face-planting into the ground. That sight made me laugh, but I knew America was not a potato. He didn't belong in the garden.

"Come on, let's go inside." I stood up, holding onto his hand. He tried to get up but I dragged him with me before he could. When I reached the stairs, I let him stand up.

"Russia? Can I have my hand back?" America asked me and I shook my head no.

"Nyet it's mine."

A pause.

"Whatever you say, Ruski."

I giggled as we walked inside. The room was dark, with bright spots causing small firefly like lights to blink in and out of my view. They were weird, so I swatted them away.

"Ruski? What you doing man?" The nice country asked me.

"Firrreflies. Zey arrre everrrywhere."
"There's nothing- nevermind. Come on, let's get you on the couch."

Nice country lead me to my living room where Angel Boy was chilling. He was reading a book and was saying words in English. He was having a hard day yesterday and through the book. Then he refused to speak English.

"Hey!" I exclaimed, running to close to window curtains and shut off the lights. Nice country made sounds of surprise and half formed words whenever I pulled him in the different directions.

"Whoa, Russia, man, what are you doing!" Nice country tried to steady himself.

"Angel boy, do zng. Do zing!" I turned to Kaz who looked to me weirdly. He rolled his eyes and set the book down next to him.

He untucked his wings and spread them out a little bit before shutting his eyes tight. Nice country looked to me confused, but I turned his head towards Angel boy. A golden light started to spread from his feathers closest to his back, to the other feathers. The light engulfed each one until his wings light up the room.

"Whoa." Nice country's mouth fell open, a golden light reflecting off his glasses. "I didn't know your wings could do that."

"Not I for a while." Angel boy looked at them before standing up. "But they make drunk Russia happy."

I reached out to touch his wings, dragging Nice country with me. They were soft and felt like normal feathers, but glowed like the sun. I hoped they had some sort of power to them, like that one movie with the glowing hair. But nope. They just are nightlights.

"Dude, that is just so cool." Nice country stroked his wings. Angel boy shivered and he quickly pulled his hand away.

"Sorry, I just saw Russia do it, so I thought it was okay."

"It's okay, it just feels like cat being a pet." Angel Boy explained rubbing his head. He meant being petted, but Nice country seemed like he understood.

"He's a kat. He likes being pet." I leaned my head on top of Nice countries. Angel boy blushed and hissed, "Ресей, жап! Мен мысық емеспін және бұл туралы адамдарға айтпаңыз! (Russia, shut up! I'm not a cat, and don't tell people that!)"

I laughed slightly, and shifted my weight so Nice country was holding me up. My feet felt like jelly, so he'd have to help me.

"Whoa, dude, I think you need to sit down." Nice country lead me to the couch. I sat down and pulled him down with me. He landed on my lap and I wrapped my arms around him, nuzzling his neck.

"Uhhh, Ruski? Whatcha doin' there bud?" Nice country wiggled, trying to get out of my hold of him. No! I'm not letting him go. Whether he likes it or not.

Angel boy went to open the curtains and turn the lights back on. I was sad his wing lights started to dim, but I knew he couldn't keep them like that for long. No matter how much he tried.

"Imma go. Have fun." Angel boy picked up his book and patted my head. I smiled and squeezed Nice country like he was a small stuffed animal. He was cute like one, and was small enough to fit in my arms.

"Noo, don't leave me." The nice country reached out to Angel boy, but he left him while laughing.

I yawned and looked at the clock. It was almost sunset time. And I was tired. Maybe I should sleep. But what about the Nice country? Who's gonna watch him? Nevermind, I'll just hold him until I wake back up. That way no one can hurt him while I'm asleep.

"Whoa, wait, what are you doing?"
I fell down on my side, Nice county in my arms. He held onto my arms tightly, almost leaning over the edge of the couch. I didn't want to him to fall off, so I held him tighter.

My answer was another yawn.

"Ruski?"

"Shhh. I sleep now."

Nice country sighed and he adjusted himself so he was comfertable. "No homo, right?"

"Shhh. Niet one vill hurrrt you now, Nice kountrrry. Not when I have you."
"Sounds homo." America patted my hand and yawned. "Thanks Drunk Russia."

I mumbled something that I don't know and shut my eyes. Music played something, that or it was a TV. I could hear faint voices of my siblings. But before I fell into darkness, I heard a deep voice. Not Angel boy, not me, or nice country.

"Don't vorrrry son. The sun vill rrrise over the mother mountrrry once again."

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**Narrators POV**

"Hello!" Japan waved, her ears pointed up and her slightly fanged teeth in a greeting smile.
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"I need some ideas for some truths and dares for this weekend."

No, you aren't supposed to talk to the readers, that's illegal.

"Shh, narrator." Japan hushed, holding up her finger to her lips. "I want these two together as much as all of you, so give me some fun ones to put them through!"

Japan waved once more before turning back to face her desk. She was drawing out another manga comic, this one obviously, a yaoi. She was hoping it would give her ideas. But asking readers would be easer, too. So, like the country she was, she broke the forth wall for yaoi.

And to make sure this doesn't escalate beyond casual conversation, please someone just answer her.

**((Be weary of Japan, lol. Well, I hope it'll stay laughs. Have some Drunk Russia filler and forth wall breaking Japan!**

**Also, fun thing. Do not take personal health care lessions from me. It's almost six in the morning, and now I am going to bed. So if there's mistakes, I apologize, my sleep deprived ass is stupid. Point them out, and I'll fix them.))**

**Yeah nothing has changed. Still no healthy sleep schedule.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Players

**Narrator's POV**

South Korea sat on his bed, vigorously pressing the buttons on his controller. His mouth was open, forming the words his mind thought but not saying them out loud. His hands made quick jagged movements as if the motions would affect his game character's placement.

"당신은 잘못하고있다. (You're doing it wrong.)"

"나는 당신이 비판하지 말고 보도록 초대했습니다. (I invited you to watch, not to criticize.)"

His brother sighed deeply as if to provoke another argument. But he couldn't let his antiques distract him. Wrong or not, he was winning.

North Korea frowned and watched with an intense focus eye, studying his brothers' reaction time, certain moves he'd make and so forth. They were rather unorganized, choppy, and purely in the moment. He had no plan, no clear path of action. And yet, he was winning.

South's phone played a little jingle, and he paused the game. He checked the message and seen it was an invite to a mini party at Germany's. Which was weird, since Germany never really invited people over to his house. To be honest, it was always kind of creepy, too. South had never been inside, but the outer design of it was off-putting. It reeked of bad energy, for obvious reasons. The history there was not exactly pure white.

"무엇입니까? (What was it?)" North asked, only cause he had nothing better to focus on. The game was paused; his only interest.

"독일은 파티에 초대를 보냈습니다. (Germany sent me an invite to a party.)" South showed him his screen, North quickly scanning it.

"당신은하지 않을거야. (You're not going.)"

"네 맞아요. (Yeah right. I totally am.)"

"나는 거절했다. (I said no.)"

"글쎄, 나는 그렇다고 말했다. (Well, I said yes.)"

The two looked at each other, holding eye contact and glaring. It was yet another standoff between them, a regular occurrence. North holding his straightened stance, and South leaning forward to try and put him off.

"독일은 그 미국인과 친구입니다. (Germany is friends with that American.)"

"거기는! (There it is!)" South threw his hands up in the air dramatically. He stood, taking a few steps away from the bed to pace. "우리는 그것을 얻습니다, 당신은 미국을 싫어하지만 진지하게? 나는 그 남자를 좋아한다! (We get it, you hate America, but seriously? I don't, I like the guy!)"

"남쪽 난 (South, I-)"

"아니! (Nope!)" South pointed his finger at North, shutting him up by his sudden action. "어, 나는이 모임에 가서 재미있게 놀거야. 사실로! (Nuh huh, I will go and have fun at this get-together. In fact!)"

North sat still and watched his brother act out of exasperation. He made dramatic movements with his words, waving his hands around and exaggerating his facial expressions. It took a lot for him not to lash out in anger from this absurd behavior directed him.

But he couldn't hold himself when South had the audacity to point to him and demand, "당신은 나와 함께 간다! (You are coming with me!)"

"뭐!? 아니! (What!? No!)"

"예. 나는 당신을 데려오고 당신은 선택의 여지가 없습니다. (Yes. I'm bringing you along and you have no choice.)"

North stood, gave South a furious glare. They both stayed in place, having yet another stair off. But when it was apparent that South wouldn't back down, North stomped out of the room.

The leftover tension was eased slightly when South sighed and let his shoulders drop. He hadn't realized he was holding his breath until then. Going against North was dangerous at times, but lately, he's been more passive. Whether it's him biding his time to do something bad, or he actually is starting to loosen up is yet to be figured out. Either way, South is determined to bring North along with him. They used to be such close brothers. He just wanted what they once had before.

Meanwhile, Japan checked her phone to see if those she messaged had answered. Granted, she had just sent out the mass text but usually, South Korea answered almost immediately.

Germany sent the invite, and Japan said she'd invite a few others. To make their efforts for plan 'Rusame' hidden slightly. Oooh! What if she brought China along? If South brought his brother, she could see if those two could mingle together.

She jumped up and went over to her ship board. It had dozens of countries photos, or names, all connected with different colored string. A color chart was pasted next to the board, explaining the color codes. She may be an obsessed fangirl, but she's an organized obsessed fangirl.

"さて、中国はベトナム、おそらく台湾にとって可能な国です。しかし、彼が北朝鮮とペアになると, (Okay, China is a possible one for Vietnam, maybe Taiwan. But if he gets paired with North Korea,) " Japan spoke to herself as she grabbed a green string and tied it around the pin that held North's picture. He was posed in it like it was a mugshot rather than a casual picture.  She tapped her chin looking up at the board. Germany said he would invite America and Poland would invite Russia. So those two will be put together, her and South (hopefully), and China and North. Any other pairing possible?

She looked across the board, looking for a green or pink string. Green for possible matches, pink for in progress. Has to have that

connection, but would also have to make sense for coming to Germany's house.

Canada!

Green string to Ukraine, and Mexico. Hmmm. Ukraine and he have been hanging out more often now, but Japan found out that Mexico has a crush on Canada. Yaoi is better, so she would somehow have to get Canada and Mexico to the party. Send an invite to Canada, he'll show up. He wouldn't want to turn down something he was personally invited to, he was too nice for that. And if Japan mentioned to Mexico that Canada would be at the party, then he'll for sure arrive.  She'll just have to pretend like she was handing out fliers or something and casually mention that Canada will be there to Mexico. Or, find him on social media and message him like it was a group text.

Oh, poor Mexico.

The small country was laying on his bed frustrated. The plain ceiling was now being used as a grid for his thoughts as he tried to sort them. He hated feeling so conflicted. But he wouldn't ask for help.

Canada.

Of all countries, he had to like Canada? I mean, really, what wasn't there to like about him? He was super nice, helpful, a gentle giant, really. So passionate, thoughtful, polite, and was sometimes a voice of reason. His appearance was slim and meek, but in reality, he was very strong. It was attractive, and he loved it when he was easily picked up by the country. Being swung in the air, held like a small child, it all seemed demeaning to Mexico when others did it. Sure he'd laugh and play along, but after a while, he'd find it annoying and would want to quite. But not with Canada. It was different.

And as nice friends as they were, Canada didn't seem to notice Mexico's extra excitement when seeing him. Or the extra steps he'd take to see him and hang out. No, that was him being a good friend.  And now Ukraine entered the picture.

She was cold, distant and seemed angry all the time. Why would Canada like her? Especially over him? It didn't seem fair.

As he was lost in his small and saddening daydream, Japan sent the invite to the party to him. He would check his phone later, right now he just wanted to think. Think and maybe plan a way for him to get Canada alone. If he could confess his feelings to him before anything else happens between him and Ukraine, then maybe he'd have a chance. Maybe Canada would be too polite to turn him down and agree to go out with him. A horrible thought to have, but one that lingered longer than Mexico would have liked.

No. He won't guilt trip Canada. That's wrong. He'd just have to hope that Canada felt the same way.

He didn't want to think about what would happen if he didn't.

**((Shorter, I think, and featuring countries that haven't had been showed yet! Don't worry, the truth or dare chapter will be up soon but it might be after Friday. Give more time for more good ideas, liking what I'm seeing so far. I'm not gonna be online, or in range of cell service, until then tho. Going camping!))**

**Thank you IeatbEkFeAsTfordiner for sending me this chapter you saved my life here!**

**Ësgöge'ae' m y friends!**
**~Galaxy**

# Truth or Dare Part 1

**America's POV**

Germany throwing a party? At his house? That's new. I could understand a small little thing between him and another person. But apparently, there will be, like, 7 people there. That's a lot for him!

"You ready America?" Canada asked from the front door. I looked at my brother, who was dressed rather casually, and I nodded.

"Nothing is gonna happen, right?" He pointed to his eyes, shifting nervously in place. I frowned.

"Dude, don't worry. I'm not gonna start puking and saying weird stuff again." I grabbed my jacket and put on my boots, moving in jagged motions. I recalled back to my last episode, it wasn't too long ago. My hands were still bandaged from me punching my mirror. It was when Germany came over. When he found me. He had been really nice about it, not asking questions when I asked him not to. It ate him up inside, I could tell, but still, Ger-man kept quiet. And didn't tell anyone, either, not like I thought he would have anyways.

"I'm just making sure." Canada rubbed the back of his head and looked to me with pity. That look I always hated. Not specifically from him, just pity in general. I hated that so much.

I left without another word. Canada fallowed me, calling out a bye to the countries in the house. Rude, I know, but I didn't feel too sorry.

The walk to Germany's wasn't too far, so we arrived in no time. And on time, like Canada wanted. He said so we weren't rude. I tried to reassure him that we would have been fine, that Ger-man wouldn't hold it against us or feel bad or anything. Canada told me it's a 'just in case' thing.

"Guten tag! (Good Afteroon!)" Germany greeted us at the door. He motioned for us to come in and we did. Voices came from the living room, so I figure that's where the party place is.

"Wassup everyone!" I demanded attention as I strolled into the room. Scattered throughout the room were Russia, Japan, Mexico, and Poland.

"Oh nyet, who brrrought Amerrrikan," Russia smirked at me, making a joke.

"Oh hush you, Russian." I teased back and sat down next to Japan. Her bag was where I was gonna sit, but she moved it onto her lap. Japan was smiling, her tail flicking around excitedly. I had to swat it out of my face a few times. She didn't notice.

"Mexico!" Canada smiled, and sounded slightly surprised, as he walked into the room. Germany walked in with him and he quickly went over to sit by Poland on the couch together. Mexico, who was talking to Russia, looked up at my brother and smiled widely.

"Hola Canada!" Mexico moved over on the floor and patted the empty space next to him. "You can sit here!"

My brother smiled and lumbered his way over to his 'spot'.

"Yo, who else is coming?" I looked over to Germany. He was curled up next to Poland, who had his arm around him.
"Oh, I don't know. Chapman? (Japan?)" He shrugged and looked to her for an answer.

"Wait, Japan?" I looked to the said country confused. Why would she know?

"Oh! Yeah, we should be expecting China, South Korea, and his brother." Japan counted off her fingers and gave us a smile. Okay, this group is a lot more than 7 now.

"Wait, North Korea is coming? Here?" I looked to her shocked and concerned and looked to everyone else. Canada looked at me nervously, Germany bit his lip, Poland was looking at everyone's reactions, Mexico frowned and Russia didn't seem to care.

And Japan? She seemed happy.

"One, to a party? Two, a party that I'm at?"

"It'll be fine, komrrrade, just leave each other alone." Russia waved off the problem and took a drink from some pop that Poland had sat down. He gave Russia a look but let it go.

"Easier said than done," I muttered.
"Here, how about you sit next to Russia so he can stop you from getting into another fight with North." Japan pointed over at the empty cushion on the couch next to Russia. I noticed that she looked over at Poland and Germany, who smiled and nodded.

That's weird. When did they start getting onto the same page as her?

"Fine, Russia, hold me back then. Or hold him back, whichever one happens." I gave a dramatic sigh and dragged my feet as I walked to my new assigned spot. Russia set his elbow down on my head and used me as an armrest. Whatever, I didn't mind too much.

"What are we doing?" Mexico asked. I looked over and saw that he and Canada had switched hats. He wore my brothers' raccoon hat and he wore his sombrero.

"Vateffer comes to mind." Germany shared another look with Japan. She smiled and nodded back, a slight wink with her nod. Hang on. Poland just winked back. They are up to something I can tell. But what, and why?

Russia grabbed something by his seat and held it up to see. Surprisingly, it was a bottle of Vodka.

"I have zis on mind of me." He smiled proudly at it like it was an award he just won. "Who's up forrr shots."

"Nope, I learned my lesson." I pushed the bottle away, to which Russia frowned.

"No way it's as good as tequila, but I'll challenge you, Russia." Mexico stood up in his spot. He set his hands on his hips and tried

to stand taller. "Since America is too chicken to do it."

"Hey!" I sat up and gave him a glare. Mexico smiled at me, Canada tugging on his shirt to get him to sit back down. I knew it wasn't a serious thing, he was just messing around, but I'll not stand for being called a chicken.

"Know what, Ruski? Give me the bottle." I held out my hand. Russia shrugged and gave it to me. "Anyone -but Russia-, " I pointed to him and he gave me a look, "wanna go against me?"

"Classic America with the alcohol."
I looked over and saw South Korea walking into the room. His headphones that were around his neck where blasting music loudly, loud enough for me to hear it.

"Aaaand it's my bad choices that put me in stereotypes." I sighed, handing the bottle back to Russia. He took it with a shrug and started drinking from it. Ignoring that, I held open my arms as a welcome gesture and greeted, "Wassup SK!"

"Guten Tag Zouth Korea." Germany waved politely, sounding a little nervous. I sat back down and looked at him. He was fiddling with his hands, one nervous habit of his. It's then I realized it must've been nerve-racking to have so many people in his house. So many new people for that matter. South had never been in his house before, neither had Japan and Mexico.

"South, sit by me!" Japan tapped the seat by her, and seeing how it was either there or the floor, he obliged. I watched him sit down, greet her in Korean, then saw Japan blush. She noticed me looking so it was then when I gave her a wink.

"Isn't your brother supposed to be here?" Poland asked, looking to the entrance of the living room. South nodded and said, "Yeah, he's in the kitchen with China."

I nodded and thought that would be best. Whatever keeps that country away for a little while longer.
"They said they'd come in when they'd want."

Germany sat up more and looked like he was about to bolt to the kitchen, but Poland held him down. "It's fine kochanie (darling), they won't do anything."

"My brother is calmer when he's just talking with an ally," South reassured Germany, too. Then he looked around the room and took in the new environment. "Nice place you have, though."

Germany smiled weakly and nodded. Poland noticed how much his anxiety had risen and set his free hand on his. He tightly clutched his hand, stopping his nervous fidgeting. It was cute seeing my friend be easily calmed down by someone he loved.

A laugh caught my attention and I noticed that Mexico and Canada had segregated themselves from the conversation. My brother had set Mexico down in his lap and was chatting away with him like the rest of us weren't here.

Huh.

Japan and South were paired up, talking and laughing, too. Apparently, China and North were in the other room together. They were another pair.

That left me and Russia.

That look Japan shared with Germany and Poland earlier! This is their plan! They wanted to pair one of these groups up, and used the others as a cover! But which one? Germany and Poland were already together. Mexico and Canada? My brother? It's Japan, so maybe... North and China? Nah, North is like a huge homophobe. Me and Russia? Nah, Ruski is straight. Her and SK? That could be...

"Hey, I have an idea." I caught everyone's attention with my loud amazing voice. With a smirk on my face, I looked at Japan and said, "How's about we play truth or dare?"

"Rrreally, but zat's child game." Russia set his bottle down on the small table that was holding up a lamp.

"Then we will be kids!" South raised his fist into the air like a salute, to which I returned by fist-bumping him. Germany flinched at the

gesture and I didn't know why.

"Okay, well, since you suggested it, America, you go first." Mexico gestured to me. I smiled and turned my head slowly to Japan and South. She noticed what I was doing and her ears perked up.

"South, buddy, Truth or Dare?"

"Hmm. How about truth?"

"Sad. But okay, is there someone currently that has interested you romantically?" I raised a brow to him and he laughed nervously. Canada chuckled when it became apparent that South was flustered, his cheeks reddening.

"Such a childish start, even after what I said. But yeah. For your information America, yes there is." South crossed his arms and turned his head away from the group.

"Is it someone in this group?" I pushed forward looking to Japan. She straightened up and shot me a glare but stopped when South spoke again.

"You only get one question per turn, America."

"Dang, well it's your turn then Southie."

"Sure. Canada? Truth or dare?"

Canada thought then said, "Dare."

Japan whispered something to him and SK just shrugged at her secret message. "Okay, well, we dare you to dance with someone here."

I gasped and pulled out my phone to play some music. It was a good thing that I always bring my mini portable Bluetooth speaker with me. I chose a song with a good beat, knowing Canad knew the song, too. While Canada stood up, I connected my phone to my small speaker and pressed play.

"Mexico, come on!" Canada grabbed his friend's hands and pulled

him up onto his feet. They both laughed and danced in a circle like they were little kids. South, Germany, and I clapped along and stomped our feet to the beat of the music. Poland threw his head back laughing when Canada picked up Mexico and dipped him. His eyes had gone wide and he yelled in surprise, making a funny noise.

When they were done, Canada asked Poland. Canada was nice, not surprising, and just asked him to do the chicken dance. I provided the music for that, too.

We went around for a few minutes, doing simple dares and truths. Through it all, I pushed for Japan or South to do something to each other. Told South to hold Japan's hand, pet her, and other small stuff like that. Japan liked it all I could tell, and I'm pretty sure SK was super embarrassed about it. Surprisingly she didn't do anything back to me.

"Here's one for Russia, " Poland pointed to him and he perked his head up. "Something you rarely do, I dare you to say something nice about everyone in this room."

He nodded, setting his drink down. It was pop since he was dared not to drink his vodka until someone told him he could. He kept poking me, asking me to tell him he could, but I was a bitch and said no.

"South Korrrea, " Russia looked to him, "you arrre good at making yourrr own music, even zsough I don't underrrstand it."

SK nodded with a big smile.

"Japan, yourrr good at gatherrring inforrrmation, which is terrrrifying.

"Kanada, yourrr nice and polite to everrryone, but you gotta know when to stand up forrr yourrrself."

"That's fair." Canada rubbed the back of his neck and looked down.

"Mexico, you have edge, " Russia looked away and quickly muttered, "but you also have temper."

"I have what?" Mexico crossed his arms and narrowed his eyes. I couldn't tell if he was joking or actually serious.

"Poland and Gerrrmany, you arrre both my komrrrades and arree both excellent frrriends. But you arrre nosy and do not know boundarrries."

The two laughed and Russia shared in with a chuckle. When I realized Russia had to say something nice about me, I looked to him with my best smug smile and rested my chin on my hand.

"Amerrrika, " he turned to me but didn't look me in the face. My smile faltered when he wouldn't make eye contact. "You have been kind to me, even when I vas mean. Zank you."

When it was apparent that he wasn't going to insult me or had any contradicting things left to say, I looked at him strangely. But he refused to look at me. No one else noticed it, or asked, so I ignored it. Even though I really wanted to ask where my insult was. Feel kind of left out about it, strangely.

"What about us Russia?"

We all looked over and seen China walking into the room. He had his arms behind his back, a smooth strut in his step, and his chin up slightly. It was how he always looked everyday; confident. I hated that about him sometimes, but I always respected it. Because he never really cared if you liked him or not. He liked himself, and that was good enough for him. I wanted that.

"Us?" Germany asked, seeing only China as the rest of us.

China took one step to the side, and the small figure of North Korea was revealed. He stood in a similar fashion that China had. Arms behind back, feet close together, head tilted slightly up, and chest lifted. He stood like he was full of himself. Hard to explain the difference between confidence and cockiness to other countries, but trust me. I know it when I see it.

"North." I greeted with a sharp tone, squaring up my shoulders.

"America." He promptly stated, leaving no emotion on his face.

Everyone went quiet at the sudden tension, leaving the outside world the loudest sounds. Cars passed, faint voices and nature carried on like a mini-war wasn't about to start in Germany's livingroom.

Russia set his hand down on my shoulder, and that's when I had realized my hands where tight in a fist. China spoke just as I cleared my throat and relaxed my hands.

"Anything nice to say about us, Russia?"

Russia nodded, and spoke quieter than before, "uhh, China you have been close and supporrrtive even when zings got tough, even zough I find some of yourrr vays strrrange. And Norrrth Korrrea, you hold my fatherrrs' morrrals in high rrregarrrd. But you kan be extrrreme."

Another long pause, one I didn't at first notice because of my staring contest with North. The corner of his mouth twitched downwards, waiting to scowl but refraining himself from it. I held up an empty smile that was obviously held with little effort.

Suddenly I was being pulled to the ground and I was jerked back into reality. Russia pulled on my arm and forced me down on the floor next to him.

"Dude, what the hell?" I ripped my arm from his strong grip and gave him a glare mixed with confusion.

"Thank you both for giving us a place to sit." China explained, slightly bowing to us as he and North took our places on the couch. Germany looked to me, then looked to China mouthing the word 'hi' and waving to his new seat partner.

North flashed me a smirk, and added, "Yes, thank you."

To piss him off, I smiled back and quickly replied, "anything for that sweet ass."

North's face scrunched up in disgust, a sight I only got to enjoy seeing for a second. Russia's huge hand hit the back of my head, moving me forward suddenly. My eyes shut from the impact, and I

groaned and rubbed the back of my head. Feeling my sunglasses had fallen slightly, I pushed them up before I opened my eyes again.

"Moving on, " Russia gave me a glare, then looked up at China. "Ve arrre playing game, you do darree orrr you tell trrruth."

"Truth or dare." Canada put what he said in simpler words.

"And it's my turn!" Japan broke the quieter tone with her loud high pitched voice. "Russia, truth or dare?"

"Darrre, of kourrrse."

"I dare you to switch clothes with America for two rounds. The ones you can fit, at least."

"My huh?" I grabbed the edge of my shirt and stretched it out slightly so I could read the font clearly. It was my favorite black NATO shirt, one that I knew Russia would stretch if he even tried to wear it.

"Give me yourrr shirrrt."

I looked to Russia and my face fell. He had already taken off his shirt, was holding it in his outstretched offering hand, and held out his other one expectantly. I got a flood of memories that I shook my head to get rid of. No! Do not let your gayness get to you, America! He may be super built with nice abs, but he is straight! A, admittedly attractive, straight as a ruler friend!

I took off my shirt, gave it to him and put his on quickly. It was a stripped long sleeve that was big on me. The ends of the sleeves went past my hands, so I could wave them around like weapons or pretend to be a T-Rex. To top it off, Russia took off his fuzzy helmet-shaped hat and placed it on my head. It, too, was big. Only slightly, so it fell to the top of my sunglass, which held them up.

Oh shit.

I gotta give him my sunglasses.
In my jacket pocket, I had a spare pair of shades, so I grabbed those

instead and handed them to Russia.

"To complete the look, since you ain't getting the ones on my face." I did a small click with my tongue just for dramatic effect, trying not to act suspicious. He took them and put them on with a roll of his head like he was rolling his eyes. It was odd seeing him look similar to my style, but I no doubt looked stranger.

"How do I look?" I place my hand on my hip, and my head (or Russia's hat) and gave a dramatic pose. Russia lifted up my glasses that were on his face with a finger and answered, "Utterrrly stupid."

"You look like a kid in an oversized shirt." Mexico snickered at me.

"He's adorable!" Poland and Germany both teased together, making baby noises and cooing at me. I stuck out my tongue, which made me seem only more childish.

"Let me get my phone!" Japan narrated her next actions as she dug around in her pocket for her phone.

"And Russia, you still manage to look intimating in my brother's clothes." Canada acknowledged that my shirt was tight on him, clinging to his form rather uncomfortably. It put an emphasis on his muscles and again I found myself staring.

"Amerrrika?" Russia poked me.

I shook my head again, blinking back into reality. Everyone was laughing over something that I had missed, not noticing I was stuck in a daze. Japan was on her phone, giggling to herself about what was on it. Russia tilted his head, a silent way of asking me, "wtf?"

"Oh, um. I was just making sure you weren't stretching my shirt out or anything, man." I tapped his shoulder, nervously laughing and feeling embarrassed that I was just caught staring at him.

He nodded and turned his attention back to who's ever turn it was. I turned my head toward the group as well but caught my eyes lingering on Russia. I would snap back to the group but then drift back to the country besides me. I couldn't help it, which frustrated me. He was usually always wearing his hat, it was strange to see

him without it. I could see his full face, and his white fluffy hair that was usually hidden.

He laughed at a joke I didn't hear. I chuckled just to make it seem like I was paying attention to what was going on. But I wasn't, I was too transfixed on his laugh. It was deep, hitching in pitch occasionally. Not the most attractive that would immediately make you stop and listen, but still when he laughed as he did I didn't hear anything else. It almost sounded rusty, as if he hadn't really laughed like that in a long time. His smile was wide, scrunching up his cheeks, and squinting his eyes. When he had small breathy chuckles mixed in, he would close his eyes for a second. Like he was relishing in the small fleeting moments of happiness before time pushed it into the past.

That small moment when I noticed all that may have only been a few seconds, but it felt like a few minutes to me. And it only took that long for me to recognize why my heart was suddenly beating slightly faster, why I had the rush of blood to my face, and why the lightweight feeling in my stomach was there.

That was enough for me to mumble under my breath, marking the beginning of a rollercoaster ride.

"Shit."

**((Aaaaaand I'm a little shit who took about a week to write this. Cool. Anyways, I wanted to make up for that and leave this chapter here and do a part two, since a lot of you have been waiting patiently. Thank you for that, I'll try to keep an actual schedule this time. I'll have to, I have school tomorrow.**

**.....send regards to my funeral.))**

**Haha no school for me!!**

**Ësgöge'ae' my comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Truth or Dare Part 2

[image]

**Aaaand everyone's favourite cause of the one scene in, ironically enough, the closet.**

**Russia's POV**

South Korea's music played as background noise as I took another drink of my Vodka to skip the truth. Mexico rolled his eyes at me, seeing how much I had taken advantage of the new rule to our game. If one of us wanted to skip a dare or truth, we'd have to take a shot or drink of some alcohol. Germany brought out his, Mexico got someone to drop off something for him, and I had mine. And since everyone had banned me from it for a while, I was taking advantage of my new escape.

"And Russia skips again." America rolled out his vowels, giving me a raised eyebrow look.

"Vodka good." Was my only argument.

"America!" Japan jumped onto her feet and pointed at America the best she could. She was dared to do shots with South Korea, and they both were slightly tipsy. Though she was pointing at China, she said, "America, I dare you to dress as a maid!"

"But I just got back into my actual clothes!" He complained.

"Too bad!" South Korea giggled like he has been for the past few minutes. Kid can't hold too much.

"Wait, that's your only complaint?" North Korea crossed his arms, obviously talking about the cross-dressing part. Why was he surprised? Its America, he won't care. He'd probably try to be dramatic with the whole thing, or if anyone shows any sign of embarrassment he'd flirt with them the entire night.

He better not.

“Well, I’ll complain if it doesn’t look good on me, other than that no. I’d totally rock that look.”

Prove me right huh?

Japan pulled the costume out of her bag, handed it to America and he went to the bathroom to change. We didn’t ask where she got that from, or why she had it on her. Not like she would’ve made sense, that girl was out of it. Slipping in and out of Japanese when she talked, which is a language I don’t understand.

While America was busy, we moved on with the game. And I carried on with the small gulp of vodka I’d take with everyone’s turn. Germany has to sing a song, I drink vodka. Mexico has to reenact a scene from a movie, I drink vodka. Canada had to tell everyone a secret, I drink. Apparently, he’s afraid of the dark.

It was SK’s turn again—we stopped fallowing a certain pattern and whoever spoke first got to go— just as we heard America walking down the hall back to us. He certainly took his time with his outfit and entrance, I noted about to take another drink of my vodka.

“Russia, 나는 당신을 위해 감히있어. (I got a dare for you.)”

I didn’t pay attention to him any further, so I didn’t realize he slipped into Korean. I was busy looking at America.

“We don’t know that last bit.”

America stood in the hallway entrance, hand on his hip and his other one holding a black and white feather fan up to his face. It was a corset costume, white lace at the top, strings to pull it tight in the front, a white string bow at the top, too. The skirt was very frilly, white lace at the bottom of that as well. It was very short, a few inches above his knees. He had on white gloves, a black neck choker, black high heels, and some weird fabric thing on his head. Despite it clashing with his rather….extravagant look, he was still wearing his sunglasses.

What is under those?

“Ooh, look at you, Ame.” Canada laughed at his look, and he did a quick sharp pose that was him sticking out his hip, throwing his head back, and making the skirt fly up. I quickly looked down into my bottle of vodka. Ugh, my stomach feels weird. I think I drank too much of this too fast. But, no Russian backs down so easily so this is nothing.

Mumbling from North Korea caught my ear and that when I started listening in on the group again.

“How do I look, Ruski?”

I looked back up at America and I noticed he got a lot closer. I studied his figure again and wanted to roll my eyes at him and just spit out another meaningless insult I always give him. But I hesitated, letting him stay in my vision longer than I had intended. Forcing myself to clear my throat, I looked back at my vodka and mumbled, “Utterrrly stupid.”

“That’s what you said last time, and I know I look adorable.” He sat down next to me, dramatically fluffing up his skirt and pretending to adjust some of his accessories. This time it was second nature to roll my eyes and take another drink. If I kept this up, I’d be drunk in no time. Maybe then I can make it through this game.

“Russia, dare.”

“You mean trrruth orrr darrre?” I gave South a weird look when he didn’t add the optional truth that comes with the dare.

“No, I mean dare.”

Leaving me with no choice, I figured I’d at least do one of the requests. Heavy on just one, since he gave me no other option.

“Alrrright, what is it?” I took another drink.

“I dare you to,” he paused and covered his mouth with a fist. America leaned away as we all got ready for South to puke up his rapidly consumed alcohol. But when it didn’t happen he shook his head and continued, “I dare you to dress like Japan.”

Germany busted out laughing, holding his stomach and leaning over. I frowned at his reaction, and at Poland's stifled laughter. I slowly looked from them to Japan and dreaded to see she was in her uniform she always wore. I had to wear that? A skirt? A short skirt?

"I can giffe vu extra clothes for now," Germany stood attempting to help Japan to her feet. I finished off my drink, refusing to be sober as I willingly did this dare. As I was doing that, Japan held up her hand, telling Germany to stop. I watched her dig in her bag, and pulled out a matching outfit to her own. It was bigger than the size she would wear, so I was very confused and concerned about why she had it. Or how.

"There you go dearie Russia." Japan threw it at me.

I caught it mid-air and looked disapprovingly at it. Then I tried to take one last sip from my bottle but was let down when it became apparent that I had already finished it off to its very last drop.

"Shit." I stood, handed the empty bottle to America, and marched off to get changed into this ridiculous outfit. And to lose any and all self-respect I had left for myself.

When I had the stupid outfit on, I held my back up against the bathroom door and refused to look at myself. The skirt was way too short for me and I kept tugging it down the best I could. But nothing helped, cause if I tugged too hard I would pull the skirt off of me.

"это пытка. (This is torture.)"

I looked over at the sink where there was a headband with fake red cat ears attached to it and a fake cat tail. Japan probably planned this and made those extra appendages just for me. She is so creepy, and I need to know how she does her creepiness well.

A nock on the door behind me cut through the quiet embarrassment I already was suffering through. Then America's voice followed, "Yo Russia, dude. You good in there?"

“Niet.”

“Come on, it’s not that bad. Plus Poland had a dare for me, and I need you out here to do it.”

“Whhyyyyy…….” I slurred my whin and back away from the door.

“Russia, dude, the faster you get out here the faster it’ll be for you to take that stuff off.”

Damn it, he had a point.

With that thought, and my stomach doing flips I grabbed the cat ears and tail and put those on. Before I left the room, I looked at my discarded clothes and decided to leave those there. America had done the same before me, his shirt and pants left on the floor. For saying how much he liked his shirt, he was completely okay with leaving it in a crumpled ball and discarding it like it was nothing.

“Oh. My. God.” Was America’s first comment when I opened the door.

“Not vord!” I growled through clenched teeth, shoving him hard in the chest with every syllable. He was still in his costume, the second thing I had noticed, and when I did I quickly backed away. He was still looking at me though, mouth agape slightly.

“Yeah, yeah, I look stupid.” I looked away from him and stomped off towards the living room. A second later, I heard America’s heels tapping behind me as he ran to catch up.

“Ahhh, Russia, you look adorable.” Poland stuck out his tongue at me when I walked into view. I stuck my tongue back out at him, not finding any joy in this particular game anymore. After Poland cleared the way for insulting me, everyone followed suit.

“Ahh, he is soo red.”

“You look absolutely ridiculous.”

“Russia, if it helps, you’d make an adorable cat.”

“Do a little spin, kitty!”

“That skirt suits him, does it not?” America came up from behind me and stood next to me. He fluffed up my skirt and I quickly shot my hands down to keep myself covered.

“Amerrrica, what the fuck!” I screeched, holding the skirt down as far as I could. He laughed, resting his hand on my shoulder and said, “I’m only playing.”

“Yeah, playing the game. You still have a dare to do America.” Mexico reminded him of a dare that I have yet to find out about. One that apparently had me involved with it.

“Fine, Ruski, sit down.”

I gladly did that, hands in my lap, and cross-legged to try and cover myself up the best I could. But to my surprise, America came over and sat down in my lap. I quickly moved my hands, a surprised frown replacing my angered and embarrassed expression.

“What the hell-“

“It’s a dare, so shut up.” America quickly interrupted, turning his head slightly to talk to me.

I growled again, setting my hands down on the ground next to me. I heard Germany laughing so I shot him a glare. He just smiled at me, chin on his hand. North rolled his eyes at something that China whispered to him and I quickly looked back to Germany.

“Gerrrmany, I darrre you to get me morrre alkohol.”

He raised a brow, but got up and headed to his kitchen to get what I asked. Dare or not, he would have given it to me anyway. I am not getting drunk fast enough, I need more alcohol. It doesn’t help that America is wiggling around, trying to get comfortable and playing with his skirt.

Germany came back with a bottle of something and handed it to me. I quickly opened it and gulped it down, ignoring the ask he said to Mexico. I gulped it down, watching out of the corner of my eye

as Mexico stood up and yelled loudly.

“No retreat! No surrender!”

Then he reached behind the couch that Poland, Germany, North, and China sat on. He pulled out a guitar that I forgot he had placed there when he arrived. Colorful engravings were on the handle and around the body, making it a pretty thing to see. Swirls, small skull like designs in various bright colors such as pink, green, and orange. The base color for it was black, making the colors stand out even more.

SK paused his music for Mexico.

He put the strap around his shoulder and played with the strings for a minute before starting to strum a quiet soft melody. I perked up my head at it, the music behind it sounding familiar.

“Te amo y más.” Mexico sang with his eyes closed, slowly moving to the middle of the room. I raised my eyebrow, not understanding what he just said.

“De lo que puedes imaginar. Te amo además. Como nunca nadie jamás lo hará.

En esta canción. Va mi corazón.

Amor más que amor es el nuestro y te lo vengo a dar.”

He slowly spun around to face towards Canada as he sang the last lines. He was singing some song that was meant to be quiet, a tune that was sweet and with a voice almost like a whisper. It must be a nice song with a nice meaning, but I don’t understand a word of it.

I looked to study everyone’s expressions, just to see if someone understood anything he said.

“Te miro y más, y más y más te quiero mirar. Te amo y sabrás. Pure sentimiento y no hay nada más.

Y sueño llegar. A tu alma tocar.

Amor más que amor es el nuestro y te lo vengo a dar."

Germany was snuggled next to Poland, their eyes closed and listening to the music. Japan and South had finally stopped their drunken mumbling and shushed whispers and were listening to Mexico, too. North had softened his expression but kept his straight stance, and China was smiling at the music. America swayed his head to the beat, and he mouthed some of the words as Mexico sang them. He knows the song Mexico is singing, then. I'll ask him about it later when I get the chance.

Suddenly Mexico played the music louder and sang with more excitement, "Ruego a Dios tenerte a mi lado. Y entonces poderte abrazar. Si no estás aqui algo falta. Yo por ti pelearé hasta el final."

Mexico strummed some more, walking around Canada, who was sitting and watching with interest. He didn't look like he knew what was being said, either, even though whatever it was being directed at him.

"Y sueño llegar. A tu alma tocar.

Amor más que amor es el nuestro y te lo vengo a dar."

Canada stood up while turning around so he could see what Mexico was doing. But as soon as he was able to stand in place, Mexico rushed up to him and played a loud note and sang just as loud, "Te," and after a second or five he shouted, "amo y más!"

He jumped and spun around to move to the other side of Canada. "Te amo y sabrás. Que nadie como yo te amará.

En esta canción. Yo veo quién soy.

Amor más que amor es el mío y lo siento, amor más que amor es el tuyo y presiento," the two danced around, skipping in a circle and Canada laughed from the act. Then Mexico slowed down the music, his prancing turning into a slow walk then him standing still. He looked up at Canada, a strange look in his eye and his friend looked back down at him with a smile. "Amor más que amor será el nuestro is tú me lo das."

I suddenly didn't need to understand what he sang to know what the song meant.

"That was fun!" Canada clapped his hands, everyone joining in with the applaud. America did a whistle and Mexico bowed for his performance. Then he looked back up at Canada, his cheeks red and a smile on his lips. The redness of his face could have been from shortness of breath—moving around as he did, singing, and playing an instrument must've taken some air—or from the fact that he was crushing on Canada.

"What was the song about?" I looked to Mexico to see if he would admit to what I had a hunch for.

He looked at me, to Canada, and then answered, "that's my secret."

"And mine!" America shot his hand up in the air to get more attention. "I understood every word."

"What did he say, my Spanish is not good." China looked to America for answers, and so did everyone else. But I noticed Mexico tense up and look scared. America will blab about this, no doubt, so with little thought, I quickly shouted out,

"Amerrrica and Mexico, trrruth orrr darrre!"

Startled by my loud outburst, everyone shut up. Besides America, who quickly shot back with a loud, "dare!"

Leaving no time for Mexico to answer, I hurriedly said, " I darrre you both not to tell anyone what zat song meant unless Mexico says to."

America frowned and sighed loudly, leaning back. I figured he forgot he was sitting in my lap, or he didn't care and sought out to annoy me. But Mexico gave out a sigh of relief and mouthed the words 'thank you' to me. I nodded slightly and winked to him. That made him know I understood the song, but also I would keep it a secret.

"Why you gotta do that to me, my man?" America fully used me for support, like i was a chair he could lean back on. I frowned and

used my hand to forcibly shove him forward.

“It’s okay, Ame, if Mexico isn’t comfortable sharing what the song meant, then we should respect that.” Canada sat back down in his spot, making small hand gestures to Mexico. The country had moved to put his guitar back behind the couch that he had first set it down at.

Mexico smiled at Canada’s thoughtfulness and that’s when I figured out why he would have liked Canada. The country is nice, caring, and polite to everyone. He was even one of the few who would smile and wave to me when he saw me in school and the rare moments outside my house. Granted he did that to everyone, but it still felt nice. I’m sure that his closest friends were showered with even more love and affection.

We carried on with the game, Mexico asking SK to tell us one of the stupidest things he has ever done.

“I once thought it was safe for me to do a backflip off of the kitchen counter.” He quickly sputtered out, replaying his music for our background noise again. North stifled a chuckle. We all looked at him, seeing how that was one of the few positive emotions he showed the entire night. But he went back to acting like it never happened.

“China, truth or dare?” South eyed his brother, then looked to the country he had asked.

China thought for a minute, looked to Mexico, then answered, “Dare.”

“I dare you to do a dance of your choosing with North.”

North shot South a glare but relaxed his expression when China stood. He had his hands tucked in under his long robe sleeves and walked over to South. I exchanged a confused expression with America but none of us said a word. South stopped his music after China whispered something to him.

China then walked over to North, who waited on the couch in the

same sitting position he had been in. He bowed slightly, offered his hand to North, and asked, “Will you dance?”

North huffed, looked at his brother with disapproval, then set his hand on China’s. He was pulled up as the song started. It was upbeat, simple, and at first, had no words. North had no time to react or even say anything before he was quickly swept up into the dance.

“Goo China!” Japan cheered, her tail flicking around excitedly.

It became very obvious that it was a ballroom type dance. I’ve seen something similar before, so I understood how it was supposed to go. China had one hand interlocked with North’s, raised in the air, one set on his back. North was confused and didn’t get the movements right away, but as soon as he did, they both moved in sync. He set his hand down on China’s shoulder no longer was looking down to study his feet.

I swayed my head to the music, slightly tapping with my hand. It was nice, and I really liked the tempo. A woman started singing in Chinese, adding to the music that filled the room. When they turned and I could see his face, China was smiling and held his eyes shut moving like he had done this dance a thousand times.

Germany quickly grabbed his drink before they could knock it over. They moved in a wider circle now, speeding up now that North knew what he was doing. He stopped glancing over at his brother to give him a nasty look, and instead looked to China and focused on him.

Strange. North was smiling at him.

Before I could think further into that, sudden movements in my lap caught my attention. America was swaying with the music, using his whole body to do so. He enjoyed the music I could tell, but his movements made him rub against my groin.

I bit the inside of my lip, trying to ignore the movements and the rising heat that started to form. To keep my mind off of it, I tried to pay attention to the music. But as soon as I did, the song ended and

China and North both stopped in their places.

Everyone clapped, China letting go of North to bow. North's hands lingered where they were for a split second longer than China had. Yes, focus on that. North bowed to China when he did the same to him. Then they went back to their seats, China pleased with himself. North looked like he was caught in thought and was looking in his lap.

"Ahh, I wanna dance now, too," America complained, looking to China and North.

China chuckled, "Well, America, you have to wait three more rounds until you can dance. Or get up."

"Damn it."

Oh great, I'm stuck like this for three rounds.

China asked Japan truth or dare and she chose dare. Now she had to speak in rhymes for five turns.

Japan asked all of us truth or dare, which was new. I said dare, hoping it would get me out of this ridiculous outfit and get America off my lap. South had started to play his music again and America moved to the beat. He has yet to realize how he is moving and if he doesn't stop immediately, I'm going to slap him.

Canada, South, and China went for truth, while me, America, Mexico, and North went for dare. Majority rules, so Japan gave us a dare.

"I dare all of you to answer my two questions honestly. Hmmmm… One; who here still has their virginity?"

"Not me." America quickly said with a click of his tongue. I raised a brow, wondering who the hell he had sex with. Then I wondered why the hell did I even care.

"Me." Canada meekly said like it was something to be embarrassed about.

“Me too, Kanada.” I nodded towards him to make him feel better.

“Me,” Mexico admitted, glancing up at Canada. I wonder if America knows about Mexico’s crush on his brother. He understood the song, so he must have to.

“Not I.” China gave his answer.

North shook his head, and with how he had been answering his truths, I wasn’t sure if it was a no to the question or to playing the game. Which made that confusing.

Germany and Poland looked to each other, Germany quickly growing red and hiding his face. That answer was obvious. Poland answered for both of them by saying, “Definitely not.”

Sudden flashbacks hit me and I quickly started chugging down the drink Germany had given me. Shit, I got that memory to die and now it’s back.

“Okay, second question.”

I was too busy with my drink to even see if South had answered.

“Who is a top, and who is a bottom?”

“Top.” America was the first to answer again.

“What he said.” I nudged towards America before taking a few more huge gulps of the drink. I had no idea what kind of alcohol it was, but it left a stinging in my throat.

“Top here, too.” Poland gave Germany a squeeze, causing him to stutter out his response in German. That I understood as him being the bottom. Just another detail to add the image in my head, thanks.

Another chug of alcohol.

“I-I-I don’t really know.” Canada rubbed his neck, his cheeks turning red. Mexico looked at Canada, glanced towards me and America and nodded with Canada’s answer.

“It doesn’t matter to me.” China shrugged his shoulders, looking to the country next to him.

North shook his head again.

I glanced at South to see what his answer would be, but it turns out he didn’t answer the last question cause he was passed out. Japan next to him didn’t notice, and it wasn’t fully obvious. He wasn’t snoring, but he did have a line of drool going down his chin that was held upright by his hand.

“いいですね、今は将来の計画を知っています. (Nice, now I know for future plans.)”

China furrowed his eyebrows at what Japan had said, understanding what she had meant. That left the rest of us confused. Although, America did turn his head confused as well. He probably recognized a few words, seeming how he understood some choice phrases in other languages.

I caught a gasp in my throat when he suddenly shifted again, unknowingly rubbing against me.

“Someone else should dance!” America jumped slightly, sending a rush of fast movement down to my lap. I bit back a growl, growing embarrassed from my situation. I could only pray that America stops moving. If he didn’t, I might grow hard from the movements. And honestly, the alcohol. Fuck, if he found out or notice, he’ll shout it to the world and never let me hear the end of it.

“I dare Germany and Poland to dance,” Mexico shouted, gaining the same enthusiasm as America had now. China nodded, pleased to have more music to listen to.

Japan stole South’s phone and played some music that I recognized as Polish. I smiled, really liking the type of music but then I tensed up realizing that it was fast-paced and really bouncy. America would defiantly move to the beat of this music, but this time it will be worse. This type of music was fast, and if I was just getting worried at the slow songs, I’m going to die here.

Poland quickly jumped up, pulling Germany up with him.

“Voa, Boland! I don’t know many bolisch dancings!” Germany quickly exclaimed as he was put in the center of the room. Poland smiled, already bouncing to the beat.

“Don’t worry, dear. Its meant to be fun, just watch me!”

Then before anything else could be done, Poland swept him up into the dance. Hand on his back and grabbing his other hand, extending it into the air, he swept him up into a spin, stepping quickly with his feet. Germany gasped in surprise and quickly held onto him so he would trip and fall.

Canada clapped along with the beat, Mexico soon doing the same. I was happy to see my two comrades dancing, even if Germany looked absolutely terrified, but I was ready to punch America if he started moving around again. China tapped his foot, North watched the two intensely with hatred in his eyes—something I will address at a later date—and Japan was just like everyone else; bouncing at the beat.

And fucking America started to do the same.

I socked him right in the arm hard and he yelled in surprise.

No one paid him any attention. Never the less, he still whipped his head around and demanded to know why I did that. I narrowed my eyes and muttered under my breath, “Quite moving arrround orrr I’ll hit you harrrder.”

America scowled at me, and after a second I saw his head tilt downwards slightly. I knew he understood when he said, “You got to be kidding me.”

I nodded, a deathly glare in my eyes, my face red from embarrassment.

“Don’t fucking move,” I warned with a tight jaw.

America paused for a moment, turned around to face the group again, and croakily said, “Oh no duh.”

Why he wasn't making any flirtatious comments, when this was the perfect opportunity surprised me, but I wasn't going to look in the mouth of a healthy horse. As long as he stopped moving, and didn't say anything, we'll be okay.

"There you go!" Poland exclaimed as soon as Germany started getting the hang of the steps. Everyone but me, and of course North, was clapping with the beat. I tapped my hand on the ground, seeing how that was just about the only thing I could do.

They spun around a lot, faster than what North and China were doing. Germany started to laugh, bouncing happily with Poland. He picked him up and spun him around, Germany laughing and regaining his composure easily as soon as he was placed back on his feet. America would sometimes start bobbing to the beat, and I'd just slap him and he'd stop. After the next turn, he can finally get off of me. Then I should be able to take this stupid outfit off as well.

When the song ended and Poland and Germany sat back down, the game moved on. Germany decided to challenge me to a drinking contest. I still had to do it with America in my lap, though. I would be fine with it, happy to drink my alcohol, and even more than what they were originally gonna allow me to have.

Germany grabbed out a few bottles of beer that had a really long name that I didn't pay attention to. I just saw the two huge glass mugs he carried in one hand and the bottle in the other. Whoever chugged the most the fastest won.

I had this in the bag.

"One," Japan started counting off holding her phone to record. Both our mugs were filled, another bottle ready for each, to pour some more for when we finish our first one. America was helping me with the pouring of the beer and Poland was helping Germany.

"Two."

We readied the mugs up to our mouths.

"Three!"

I whipped my head back, chugging down the yellowish liquid. Some of it trickled down my chin and down my neck. The fast movements started to get me to feel a little light-headed, my pervious alcohol consumption starting to get to me. When no more liquid was going down my throat, I shoved it to America. A loud shattering noise broke through the cheering atmosphere, freezing everyone in place.

I looked down and the swaying image of the broken mug was on the floor a few feet away from me. Germany had his hand covering his mouth in shock, staring wide-eyed at the shattered glass. Poland had stopped pouring him his next drink, surprised at what had just happened.

Not knowing what else to do, I grabbed the half-empty bottle and started chugging it straight from the bottle.

“Go Russia, go!” America cheered, working on opening the next bottle. I heard urges from the others for Germany to hurry, for me to keep chugging and someone saying they were gonna clean the glass. I think that was Canada.

I traded the empty bottle for the full one and started to down that one just as quickly as I had the first time. America’s voice started to warp, and I had to shut my eyes to focus. The sounds around me turned to something I can only describe at watery sounds. Faint polish music was still playing, blurring with the cheers for me and Germany.

“Go Russia, your almost there!”

I focused only on Ame’s voice and did as he said, chugging down the drink until no more came from the bottle. I gave the bottle to Ame, hoping to get another to chug down but he didn’t give me any. Instead, I got a hug from him and a shout, “HA HA! Russia wins!”

I threw my fist up in the air, confused about what I had just won but Ame sounded excited so excited I will be, too. He let go of me and I was sad, but he was still in my lap so he didn’t fully leave me. I knew I would be okay as long as I could hold onto him some way.

“How dare I pe pesded at mien ovn kame.” Germany laughed, setting his mug down. His glasses were sideways and he looked funny. But Poland held onto him, cause it looked like he was trying to fall onto the ground. Poland must not have wanted that to happen.

“I vant morrre!” I burped and slumped forward, resting my chin on Ame’s shoulder. He complained about my belch but I didn’t care. He was warm. And sometimes I’m cold, so it's nice to have someone warm.

“No, no more, you are gonna get wasted.” Ame patted my cheek and I smiled.

“Wasted Russia goes two ways.” Poland held up three fingers. Wait no, it was two. I counted wrong. “He’s like that, or he’s super depressed.”

“Nnyeeet.” I covered my cat ears, hoping I wouldn’t hear anything sad. I don’t wanna be sad. Ame didn’t want me to be sad, I remembered. He got upset when I was upset. I don’t want him to be upset, so I’ll be happy for him. But I don’t like my ears. I want my ushanka. It was one of my dads, I want that. Where did I put it?

“I vant ushanka of me,” I whispered to Ame and he sighed.

“Yo, Drunk Russia wants his hat, I’ll be right back.” Ame moved to stand up, but I wrapped my arms around his waist and pulled him right back down into my lap.

“Noooo, don’t leave. I don’t vant Nice Kounrrtry to leave.”

“Russki,” he sighed and I giggled at the name he called me. I like that name. I always pretend to hate the nicknames he gives me, but I really like them. It's better than the bad words I'm used to. I like his names.

“Make the mean kountrrry do it.” I looked at North and he looked at me offended. “Smiling is good forrr you.”

“I don’t smile,” North said in that dull voice of his. Blah.

“You verrre smiling at China when you verrre dancing.” I pointed out, getting a swat on the hand by Nice Country.

“You were?” China looked at North surprised, and North’s face went red. I ignored him when I remembered when Nice Country’s face went red. I thought it was funny when he looked like that. I wanted to see that again, but I can’t remember how I did that.

“I’ll go get your hat for you amigo.” Mexico patted my shoulder and walked away to get my hat.

“Zank yooouu,” I called to him, making sure to lean away from Nice Country so I wouldn’t shout in his ear.

North kept giving me dirty looks and I stuck out my tongue whenever I noticed it. He was a big meanie. I didn’t like meanies. I liked nice countries. Like my Nice country. Nice country wasn’t mean to me. Well, sometimes when I'm mean to him but then he’s nice. He’s not mean-mean.

“Russia.”

I looked over at Japan and she was smiling at me. Then she pointed to my Nice Country and winked. I don’t know what she meant, but I held him closer to me. I don’t want her to try and take him from me. He’s mine, and not hers. She can bug off.

“Dude, I need to breathe.” Nice country complained and I loosened my hold on him. But I refused to let him go. Hey! If Angel Boy was here, I could show Nice country his glowing wings. I feel like I did that before, but I don’t remember it so maybe I didn’t. Anyway, I know Nice Country would love to see them. They glow and are really pretty, but they don’t have healing magic. They only have pretty lights.

I felt the headband that was on my head get taken off and my hat was placed on my head. I don’t know who did it, but I still said to the magical ghost that did it, “zank you.”

Mexico replied, “De nada. (Your welcome.)”

“This costume is itchy, can I go get changed Ruski?” Nice Country

asked me, patting my knee. I grumbled a no and held him close to me. He sighed and rubbed my hand. “Don’t worry Ruski, I’ll be back man.”

“Prrromise?”

“I promise.”

“You got minute.”

“Okay.”

I let America go and he quickly got up to get into his normal clothes. I whined from him leaving and also because he wouldn’t be in that funny outfit anymore. He looked adorable in that. Plus the white lacy parts of the skirt looked fun to play with. He should wear that again so I can play with it.

China patted my shoulder to help me feel better.

“один, два, три, четыре, пять, шесть, семь (One, two, three, four, five, six, seven)….” I started counting and watched what everyone was doing.

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“…. Пятьдесят шесть, пятьдесят семь, пятьдесят восемь, пятьдесят девять, шестьдесят. (56, 57, 58, 59, 60.)”

Nice country still wasn’t back. I frowned, stood up, and started to walk to the kitchen. I wanted more of that German beer that I had. It had a funny taste to it and I liked it. So I wanted more.

I grabbed a bottle off the counter and tried to read the label. I didn’t understand anything it said, but I still opened it and started drinking from the bottle. I ignored the person tapping on my shoulder for a second. Then I turned around and saw Japan.

“Russia, truth or dare?”

I whipped my mouth and looked around the room. No one else was there so I knew she was talking to me. She did say my name, but
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she could have meant someone else.

“Darrre.”

“I dare you to play seven minutes in Heaven with America.”

“What’s zat?” I asked, taking another sip of my new drink. She looked at me, her ears doing a weird movement, then she explained to me the game. I had to take Nice country into a closet with me and we do whatever we want.

“I kan hug him?!” I gasped with a smile, liking the sound of this game.

“Yeah, you can hug him. But you can do even more to him if you want.”

“But I vant to hug him.”

“Just go play the game.”

“Okay.”

I walked towards the bathroom I thought nice country was in. The door was closed but I saw the light from under the door, so I knocked on it to see if anyone was in there.

“Occupa-do.” Nice Country’s voice came from behind the door.

“Its been morrre zan minute.” I leaned against the door, then moved my head to take another drink. It was a new one for me, so it felt weird. But I didn’t mind it, it was new and I liked it.

“Sorry Ruski, I thought I could make it.” Nice country grunted and I heard him coming towards the door. I leaned back so when he opened the door I wouldn’t fall on him. He adjusted his glasses and looked up at me, then at the bottle I held in my hand.

“Oh God, who gave you more?”

“I gave myself morrre.” I handed him the bottle. “Trrry it, it feels veirrrd.”

Nice country shook his head and handed the bottle back to me. “Go ham, dude. I’ll see if I can take you home again, once I figure out what time it is.”

He started to walk past me, but I grabbed his hand I yanked him back over to me. He yelled in surprise and grabbed onto my shirt so he wouldn’t fall. So I wrapped my arm around him and walked to the nearest door, hoping it was a closet. It wasn’t, it was a mini library. So I shut the door and tried another one.

“Ruski, man, what are you doing?” Nice country struggled against my hold on him, but he couldn’t move my arm. So he gave up, slumped down, and let his feet drag on the floor. I held him suspended upwards so he wouldn’t fall and so I could take him to a closet.

“I got darrre frrrom Japan,” I told him. There was a door that was built into the side of the staircase and I got it open. It was a closet, yes! “Ve gotta play a game kalled seven minutes in heaven.”

“Wait, What?” Nice country jumped and started to try and get away from me. I got him into the closet and I shut the door behind me. It was dark and I couldn’t see anything, but I heard America’s heavy breathing. Then I felt something warm move in front of me, hitting my chest. Loud crashes came from in front of me again, and I heard Nice Country mutter curses.

“I kant see.” I pointed out.

“Hang on.”

Click.

Light-filled the room and I saw that Nice Country was right in front of me, almost an inch of space between us. His face was like a tomato again and I smiled. Yay, I got him to look like that again. He looked just as nervous, trying to lean into the wall behind him and was trying his best not to stand too close to me.

I grabbed him in a hug and he gasped loudly. I waited until he hugged me back for me to loosen my grip. Then I let him go and

was satisfied. I got confirmation that I liked it when I saw Nice Country blush and I got to hug him. I'm done with the game now.

I tried to open the door, but it wouldn't budge. "I zink doorrr is brrroken."

"No, it's not." Japan's voice came from the other side of the door. "It has not been seven minutes yet guys."

"Japan, let us out!" Nice Country shouted. I covered my ears by pulling down the sides of my ushanka and I whined.

"Oh, Russia, I'm sorry." Nice Country set his hands on my arms, looking up at me. I saw my reflection and the glare of the lightbulb on the ceiling in his glasses. I looked sad. I can't be sad, cause than Nice Country will be sad. I don't want that.

Without thinking, I grabbed his glasses and pulled them off.

Nice Country shouted a cry of surprise, slapped his hand over his eyes, and pushed me away. I held my chest where he hit me and groaned in the pain from the force he used and from the pain in my back from hitting the door.

"Why did you do that!?" Nice Country shouted at me, still covering his eyes. I looked at him shocked and held the area where he had shoved me. My lip quivered and tears filled my eyes and I started to cry.

I sniffed and rubbed my eyes, weakly holding onto my bottle of beer.

"No, no, no, no, no, Ruski, don't cry." I felt Nice Country set his hands on my hand that was holding my chest. I leaned away from him, nudging his hands away from me. Despite that, he still tried to comfort me and apologize for what he did.

"I'm sorry man, I didn't mean to hit you hard."

"Why vas Nice Kountrrry mean to me?" I refused to look at him. His glasses were on the ground right next to my feet, where I had dropped them. But he didn't try to grab them yet.

“Because I was an idiot.”

I smiled t what he called himself finding that true. But he tried to make me feel better. And I must have scared him when I grabbed his glasses as fast as I did. “I’m sorry. I just vanted to see yourrr eyes.”

He gasped and let go of me.

After a second I felt his hand slowly move to my cheek. I liked his warm hand on my cold cheek and he moved my face slowly to turn to face him. I shut my eyes and hummed, rubbing my cheek into his hold.

“Since you're not going to remember this anyways, I guess it won't hurt.” I heard him say.

“Hmm?” I opened my eyes to look at him. His eyebrows were slanted in a worrying position, a tight frown on his lips. I didn’t notice his eyes at first. I was more worried about why he was upset. But then I saw how dark they looked and thought I was seeing things.

But then he blinked and I realized those were his real eyes.

“Zat’s weird.” I poked between his eyes. He blinked again, confused about what I said. But he didn’t move his hand from my cheek, not that I would have let him. “I like weird.”

Nice Country sighed, looked down and mumbled, “You always know what to say.”

When he looked down I frowned and grabbed his cheeks, making him look at me. I didn’t want him to look away, I wanted to stay looking at his eyes, they were different and I liked different. They were interesting.

“I like yourrr eyes.” I leaned against him and smiled. He jumped, and I felt him freeze like he didn’t know what to do. So I stayed on his head since he was small enough for me to do that comfortably.

“Russia you should kiss America!” Japan shouted from behind the

door again.

“Why?” I asked her, looking to the door for an answer.

“Whoa, Russia, you do not have to do that.” Nice Country quickly spat out, waving his hands to tell me no. His face was red again and I giggled at the sight.

“Bite his neck and see what happens,” Japan suggested again.

I shrugged and set my bottle down. I didn’t hear Nice Country protest, maybe because he was starring at the door in shock, but if he didn’t say no that meant I could. I wonder what would happen if I did do what Japan said.

So I stood in front of Nice Country and he looked up at me with the same shocked and confused face he had on when he was looking at the door. But he had his neck exposed, so I figured that was him telling me to do it. I picked him up slightly and bite down on the side of his neck. I didn’t do it hard cause I didn’t want to hurt him, but I still did it with enough pressure so it would still count as a bite.

“Ahh, Russia! What the hell!” Nice country held his neck, looking at me with wide eyes and a tomato face. I still held him up and it was funny to see him surprised and in shock the way he was.

“Japan said to do it.” I shrugged, figuring that would explain it enough.

He glanced behind me then looked at me.

“Japan, you better go away right now or I’ll tell everyone who you like.” Nice Country said to the door, glaring at it. I heard Japan squeal and then her footsteps running away. She left without unlocking the door, I thought to myself. Maybe I should tell Nice Country, he didn’t seem to know.

I looked back at Nice Country and saw he was rubbing his neck, looking at me with red cheeks. I moved his hand to see if I had bitten him too hard.  “You okay? I didn’t hurrrt you, did I?”

“N-n-no, n-no you didn’t.” He set his hands on my chest and that’s when I remembered I was still wearing the outfit that looked like Japan’s. I forgot about that. No wonder my legs were still cold. Nice Country looked at me, his face growing warmer and his face growing just as red as it was after I had bitten him.

“Russia, how drunk are you?”

“I dunno.” I smiled and grabbed my bottle again, setting him down on his feet. He looked at me as I drank the rest of what was in the bottle. I held it up to my eye, checking to see if there was any left. Aww man, it's all gone. I really liked it. Maybe I can ask Germany for more. Wait, the door is locked.

“What is your name?”

“Rrrruuussskiiii!” I chuckled, dragging out the name Nice Country gave me.

“What’s mine?”

“Nice Kountrry, of kourrrse. Bekause yourrr sooo niiice.” I did the same thing with some of the vowels in my sentence and I laughed to myself, finding that it sounded so funny.

“Your drunk enough, so you won’t remember a thing.” Nice Country nodded to himself then he noticed I was staring at him. I liked his eyes. All four of them. No, that’s not right. I blinked a few times, to get his image to stop floating around like it was. “Ruski, you wanna do me a favor?”

“Da.” I smiled, straitening out my back ready to do whatever he told me to do.

“Can you, Uhh, can you do that again? You know, what Japan told you to do?” He pointed to his neck. My bite mark was a slight red indentation on his skin and I felt bad about it. But he wanted me to do it again? Why?

“Okay.” I didn’t ask my questions, because it was Nice Country. If he wanted me to know, he’d tell me.

Before I could bite him again, he told me, “Do you know how to make a hickey Ruski?”

I nodded.

“Do that.”

“Okay.”

He wrapped his hands tightly on my shirt, and I could feel his breathing started to increase. Why he was doing that was beyond me, but whatever to keep his face as red as it was. He tilted his head to expose his neck, the side I had already bit down on and I leaned in to do as told. I remembered how to make a hickey, and decided to do what I could remember. He gasped slightly when I licked his neck, making small circles around the area I had already bit him at.

Nice Country let go of my shirt and wrapped his arms around my neck, pressing me up against him. I was confused by that but decided to ask him when I was done giving him a hickey. I bit down lightly at the spot right above where I had first done it and I felt his arms pull me in tighter. I started to suck at that spot, and he surprised me with a quiet moan. But he didn’t tell me to stop, so that must not have been a bad thing for him then.

I nuzzled his neck, before returning to bite and suck at it. He made small gasps and sounds and also started to squirm under me. For some reason, I wanted him to keep doing that. To keep moving under me, tracing his dull nails down my back, and to keep making those sounds. But I kept that to myself, and when I knew he had a hickey on his neck I stopped.

Nice Country whined when I moved away from him, and he refused to let go of me. I didn’t mind that, I liked him hugging me. So I hugged him back. When i nuzzled my head in his neck again, he whispered in my ear, “Japan isn’t back yet and it hasn’t been seven minutes yet. Can you do more?”

“Morrre what?” I mumbled, still holding him in a hug. He was comfy. And soft. Like a pillow. I’m kind of tired anyhow. He can be

my pillow right now.

“God you really are a virgin. More of what you were doing. Since sober you will be very angry at me if I gave you marks.” He explained, the last part of what he said not making any sense to me. Why would I be mad at him, he’s him! I can’t be mad at him. I may act it, but I’m most certainly not.

“Ruski did you hear me?”

I perked my head up and hummed my response. I was kind of sleepy.

“Do that again. Please.” He pointed to the visible mark I had left on his neck. I nodded, looked at him hazily as he turned his head again to show off the skin on the other side of his neck. I started working on another hickey as I had done before, and straightaway Nice Country gave me a reaction. Purely on instinct, I grabbed his hands and pulled them off of around my neck and pinned them to the wall. That seemed to surprise him but he didn’t fight back or tell me to let go. So i didn’t.

When I left another mark on his neck, I was going to pull away and see if that was what he had wanted, but before I could he rolled his hips against mine. That sent a rush of warm heat through my body and I was startled. But i didn’t let go of his hands.

“Don’t stop this time, Ruski.” He breathed out, and I nodded. So I gave him another mark, hoping he’d do that thing with his hips again. It was such a strange feeling I was overcome with, but I wanted that again. I want him to do that again.

I moved down lower, biting at his collar bone. He moaned in my ear and I pressed down harder, getting a louder one. I still didn’t want to press down too hard, because I didn’t want to hurt him. But he seemed to like it when I put more pressure and was a little rough. But I wasn’t too sure.

“Russia~.” He said my name in a moan. I lifted my head to look him in the eyes. That was new. A new feeling it brought, too, hearing him say my name like that. A burning in my chest and the

desire to hear him say it again.

He looked up at me, breathing heavy, eyes almost closed and a red hue painted brightly on his face. I stopped to take in the sight in front of me, before looking down at his lips. I let go of his hands and slowly cupped his face. He looked up at me with his black eyes and I could understand why he would cover them up. They would look scary to anyone. But they didn't scare me. I liked them.

I leaned in forward, slowly bringing his face towards mine. I didn't fully understand what I was doing, but it felt right. And Nice Country was doing the same. He shut his eyes and was leaning towards me, being guided by my hands.

A knock on the door made me jump.

"Get your clothes back on, I'm opening the door." Japan's voice came from outside, her shadow visible from under the door. I let go of Nice Country and looked around for any clothes we took off. But I didn't see any. Why would she say put them back on if they were never off?

Except for Nice Country's glasses.

I heard him mutter angrily to himself, then he shouted to Japan, "Fuck you!"

"Whaaat," she laughed from behind the door. "I gave you guys an extra few minutes. It was more like fifteen minutes in heaven."

I picked up Nice Country's glasses and attempted to clean them off. He took them out of my hands and hurried to put them on his face. They were this kind he said was a wrap-around sunglasses, so it covered his eyes even from the sides. I was sad to have his eyes covered with his glasses but I understood why. In a way, his glasses were like my bandages.

Japan opened the door and I hissed at the light. On instinct, I grabbed the doorknob and slammed the door shut.

"Too brrright," I complained to Nice Country who just rolled his eyes. He made the head movement of rolling his eyes so I figured he

did. I yawned and sat down on the floor, getting tired. The light in the closet wasn't too bright, and the one out there was blinding. Maybe I'll just stay in the closet for a little while longer.

"Come on, lets get you to lay down somewhere that isn't here." Nice Country pushed open the door and I shut my eyes. He grabbed my hands and pulled me to my feet. When he let go of me, I shot out my hand to grab his hand again. But instead, I grabbed onto what felt like his shirt.

"Ruski, you can open your eyes." He told me.

I shook my head no.

"Fine. I'll lead you to one of the guest rooms. Germany probably won't mind." He started moving and I followed him, my feet swaying.

"Poland went to put Germany to bed, he was kind of drunk," Japan explained. I heard her walking next to us, almost right beside Nice Country.

I wrapped my arms around him and slightly opened my eyes to glare at Japan. She looked at me confused but didn't say anything. She better stay away from my nice country. She can go get her own.

"China and North left to go home, South is sleeping on the couch, and your brother is staying with Mexico," she continued and I felt Nice Country nod his head. The lights were bright, so I kept my eyes half-open. But I could see enough to tell that we had reached the base of the stairs.

"Let's go, Buddy." Nice Country patted my arm and started to slowly walk up the stairs, half carrying me up with him. He said good night to Japan and she left, going back to the living room. Yaaaayyy. Now it's just me and Nice Country again.

He took me to an empty room and laid me down on the bed. I groaned and rolled over, pushing my face into the pillow. I heard Nice Country said something but it sounded warbled so I didn't understand. But then everything was quiet. Only when it got harder

to breathe did I move my head. The lights were off in this room so I could open my eyes.

Nice Country was gone.

I sat up and looked around, but he wasn't anywhere in the room with me. I looked next to me on the bed, since usually when we hang out late together he was next to me when I sleep. But he wasn't.

The door creaked open and in came Nice Country. He wore his jacket with the fluffy hood and had my clothes folded in his hands. I smiled and laid back down when I found out where he was.

"Don't you wanna get changed?" He walked over to me, holding out my clothes to me. I shook my head no and yawned.

"Too tirrred. I'm komforrrtable in zis now." I told him as he set the clothes down on the nightstand next to the bed. He nodded, glancing at my outfit, but then he quickly looked away.

"Yeah, it certainly looks comfortable." He stifled stood up and turned his back to me. He shoved his hands in his pockets and cleared his throat. "Also revealing, you wanna get under the blankets? Or pull your skirt down?"

I did both.

"Kome herrre," I whispered, realizing how quiet the house was. Faint soft music played from the first floor, but the room was quiet.

"No Ruski, I'm not." Nice Country, turned to face me. He sat down in a cushioned chair that was next to the bed right by a small bookshelf. He yawned, rubbing his eyes from under his glasses and leaned back.

"Why not?" I groaned, reaching out to grab him but I couldn't. The chair was too far away. My arm fell onto the bed, going limp from exhaustion and defeat.

Nice Country sighed, turned his head to look at me, and paused. My eyelids were getting very heavy, but I kept them open so I could see

Nice Country. He was going to say something, and I didn't want to fall asleep before he said it.

"Cause I might do something I'll regret."

I watched him rub his neck and turn away from me. The fur or fluff that was around his hood covered his neck, hiding the marks he told me to make.

He noticed I was still looking at him and he told me, "Go to bed Ruski. Hopefully, you won't remember any of this."

I nodded, not questioning what he had meant. I was tired anyway, so I did shut my eyes and move a little to get more comfortable. It didn't take long for me to fall asleep.

**Something I realized I forgot, the dang songs that where in this chapter.**

**The song North and China danced to:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1PRL3jiguo

**And Poland and Germany:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWnano_M9lk

**Okay that's it!**

**~ Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**Galaxy**

# Kitchen Fun and Past Problems

**Germany's POV**

It was around 3 when everyone left. As much as I enjoyed the company, I was relieved for everyone to leave. It's not that I don't like them all or didn't enjoy their presence, they are my friends, but I never liked that many people being at my house. They usually asked questions, ones I didn't like to answer. South Korea did seem a bit on the curious side and had wanted to wander around the house. I didn't want him to.

My memories began to get a little fuzzy later into the night, after my drinking contest with Russia.

It was weird having him in my house.

Especially with what happened with our fathers.

I waved bye to Poland as he headed home. He waved back to me with his bright smile and turned around to see where he was going. Standing there in the doorway for a few seconds, I watched his figure walk down the street. My happy smile left my face, and I was back to my empty house.

And back to cleaning.

I picked up some of the empty bottles and set them on the counter. America and South Korea offered to help me clean up, but I told them I could do it. It gave me something else to focus on while I'm here. I find that if I don't settle down, I have less a chance to think about the memories of this house.

My music played, echoing and resonating within the walls. I mumbled along with the words, stepping and moving to the beat. It was calming, the music dancing in the air, and manifesting within me as a relaxed posture. The symphony of voices and instruments was something I had noted other countries take advantage of, for

fun or for distractions. I couldn't call myself any different, slightly dancing in my living room while I cleaned up last night's mess.

The garbage had been taken out, the living room reset in its state prior to the party, the dishes washed and dried, the carpet vacuumed and the floor's swept, and the upstairs bedrooms picked up before I sat down on the couch in the living room.

For a few sweet bliss moments, that's all there was. Order restored, solidified with my music of choice and comfort in the new positive memories I have to counteract the bad ones.

Until I heard it.

At first, I thought it was my music, a weird sound to add-in. I focused more on it, but when it didn't fallow the beat as everything else had, I opened my eyes confused. The sounds had stopped and I couldn't be certain what they were.

A little on edge now, I leaned back into the cushion and tried once more to reach that level of soundness that I rarely get here.

Everything was still, and it should have been easy to relax, but I found that I couldn't. My mind was now busy with identifying every sound I heard. The music, every individual instrument played and every vocal pitch change with the words, the passing cars outside, the muffled voices of two countries outside walking past my house, footsteps from upstairs-

My eyes shot back open and I jumped to my feet when I heard them again. Footsteps, that was definitely the sound I had heard. They were quiet, shushed by the louder music, but defiantly there. Right above me, in the upstairs. Every sound was tuned out as I watched the ceiling, trailing behind where the footsteps were.

Right above me was my father's study. South must be up there somehow. He had wanted to see inside it.

I followed behind the steps and they lead me out into the hallway, by the stairs. Assuming it was South, I held my arms crossed and foot-tapping at the base of the staircase. I'm not usually one to be

strict or mean, I try not to be at least, but in my defense I was irritated, to say the least. It was very rude and inconsiderate for South to sneak back in when I was busy and snoop around. Especially in my father's study. No one has been in there since my father.

The footsteps came closer to the steps, and I scanned the wall for a shadow to start to appear, but strangely there wasn't one. Perhaps I turned off the lights, to save power.

My heart stopped when the footsteps paused at the beginning of the stairs. I'm sure they had to be there, someone had to be. But no one was on those steps.

Then I heard them start descending the stairs.

My straight stance crumbled like a wall and I stumbled back. My eyes widened and my mouth fell agape, struggling to breathe correctly. The pounding of my heart was heard in my ears and the floorboards seem to have grabbed my feet, preventing me from moving.

They reached the bottom step and slowly stopped right in front of me. My chest rose up and down as fear flew through my body faster than my blood. Instinct told me to straighten out my stance, don't look directly in his eyes, keep my mouth shut and do as he says. Never run. Never fight back. He'll always catch you, and he's always stronger. Follow directions to a tee, never leave anything out of place.

I forced myself to look around, despite the chill down my spine telling me not to. There was no one around me and the sounds stopped. My music, now a slow soft song was the only thing in the air. What once relaxed me, now haunted my mind bringing forth bad memories and familiar feelings.

Trying to avoid a panic attack, I turned to the mirror. If I see myself in the present, as I am now, I can calm down. I did that one other time and it helped my anxiety subside a little. Before I could turn my gaze upward, a low breath suddenly rushed onto my neck. For a moment, I was frozen. Someone was behind me. Standing so close, I

could feel their presence.

I looked up at my reflection, right behind it was a dark silhouette. I only gave myself a second to comprehend what I saw before whipping my head around to face the intruder.

But I saw nothing.

I gasped loudly, hurrying backward until I hit the huge silver mirror on the wall. I pushed my glasses up, trying to figure out what just happened. In the mirror, the figure was dark. They had dark clothing, I tried to pick apart the image I only saw for a moment. Dark coat, something silver and something red.

Without thinking, I ran out of the hallway, grabbed my jacket, and left the house not bothering to close the door behind me. I ran down the street, trying to get as far away from that house as possible. Everyone on the sidewalk jumped out of the way, confused about what I was doing. Someone called to me, but I ignored them. I kept running, running away from what I thought I saw behind me.

I bumped into someone accidentally-they were turning towards me around a hidden corner-and I stumbled into the road. I was able to catch my balance before I fell to the ground.

A loud honk blared in my ears and I whipped my head around in time to see bright lights speeding towards me.

The next thing I know, I hit the ground hard. My shoulder burned like fire, the exposed skin on my hand dragged across the asphalt, and my glasses flew off my face. My heart was racing and the first thing my mind was telling me was I just got hit by a car.

Tires screeched to a halt a few feet away from me, and a few seconds later I heard someone open the car door.

"OH MY GOD! ARE TOU TWO OKAY?!"

"Tvo?" I struggled to sit up with shaky arms. I noticed someone's arm was wrapped around my waist, and they were laying right next to me. They groaned and I could see that his skin was green his other arm orange, but a grey blob covered his face.

"IRELAIN!!!!"

Two sets of footsteps ran towards us just as I managed to sit up. My vision was blurry, and I recognized the color of blue mostly making up one figure, and another who was taller and mostly colored red. The two ran to us, asking so many questions I couldn't focus on any of them.

"My glasses," I mumbled. I patted around myself, looking to where they could have gone. I can make out the fuzzy shapes, but none were what I was looking for. Until the red man placed them on my hand. The glass was cracked, from what I could feel and see once I put them on.

"Are you alright?" Spain asked me, kneeling down and looking me over. I nodded, groaning, and checking myself, too. There was no blood, no real bad wounds. I was fine.

"Irelain, he God forsaken divot! (Ireland, you god forsaken idiot!)" A voiced yelled, which I recognized the accent. Scotland was holding Ireland, the one who had been laying right beside me. He was rubbing his arm, a red abrasion was slightly trickling blood. "What makes ye hink ye can play hero an' jist dive in front at a feckin' movin' vehicle! Ye coods hae gotten yerself killed, ye bampot bastered (What makes you think you can play hero and just dive in front of a fucking moving vehicle! You could have gotten yourself killed, you crazy basterd!)"

Ireland chuckled, patted the Scotsman's shoulder, and looked to me. "Yer gran' dare (okay there) Germany?"

I looked around, seeing I was on the side of the road, away from the car. My hand stung from the scrapes, and my shoulder was sore, another than that I was fine. I wasn't dead or dying, or half bloodied on Spain's bumper.

"I'm aliffe (alive)." I breathed out, holding my chest where my heart was. "Zank vu, zank vu zo much."

Ireland stood up, with help from the persistent Scotland who refused to let go of him. Spain helped me up as well, offered to give

us a ride to a hospital to make sure we were okay. We decided no since all we had was some scrapes and soreness from hitting the ground so hard. With no idea how to part from a near-death situation, he apologized again and gave me his lunch.

Us three watched as he drove away, one of the few cars that drove around.

"What wha yer runnin' ter dat fast?" Ireland turned to me, eyeing the brown paper bag in my hand. I raised a brow and looked down at Spain's lunch in my hand. I had obviously lost my appetite and was exhausted from the duration and amount my body was running on adrenaline.

I handed him the bag, to which he quickly and excitedly took. "Chust, hanyvere (Just, anywhere)." My mind retched from the memory of why I was running in the first place. What had caused me to run into Ireland, and stumbled into the street. Which then lead him to diving and tackling me to get me out of the way of an oncoming vehicle.

"Well, yisser failte ter cum wi' me ter (your welcome to come with me to) grab a few drinks." Ireland pulled out a tin-foiled wrapped sand which and handed that to the quiet Scotsman. He had been glaring at me on and off for the past few minutes. He seemed to have been angry with me for running into Ireland and causing him to dive-bomb to save me.

I looked to the road, remembering my almost untimely death and back in the direction of my house.

"Yeah, I could uze ein drink."

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**America's POV**

My phone was gone.

"Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit,"

My room was overturned as I tried to look for it, but it wasn't in
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here, or my jacket. And I can't live without that, especially since I need to know how much of last night Russia remembered.

With that thought, I slumped down onto my bed and let my guilt take me over once more. Ahhh fuck, I am an idiot. Why the hell would I do something so stupid? As soon as I realize I might like this guy, I try to take advantage of him while he is drunk. I can't blame the stupid game, or Japan, or even Drunk Russia. I'm the one who thought to ask him to do that.

It was hot and arousing, not going to lie about that.

But stupid of me to do.

I rubbed my neck, unsure whether or not I should like the marks on my neck, or despise them. In the moment, I loved them. The heat rushing through my body as he sucked on my skin was addicting. It was a strange feeling to be pinned against the wall with little control and have him have at me, but God I loved it. But now, taken out of that closet and confined space, I was conflicted. So, I kept them hidden from everyone, especially the people who were at Germany's last night.

Wait.

Shit, I probably left my phone at Germany's.

I grabbed my jacket with the fur collar and put it on, heading out of my room. Hopefully, he wouldn't mind if I just stop by to check. It's not like I can give him a heads up anyways.

"Dad, Mom, I left my phone at Germany's! I'm going to run there and get it!" I yelled to my parents as I put on my boots by the door.

"Mom and Dad aren't home."

I turned behind me to see New Zealand come walking out of the kitchen, a drink in hand. He leaned against the door frame and looked me up and down, noticing I was dressed to leave.

"Where yoi really goeeng?"

"Actually, I told the truth this time. I think I did leave my phone and my man Ger's place." I placed my hand on my hip, offended that he would assume I would lie about that. Well, then again, I have lied about where I was going a fe-multiple times. It would be fair to assume I would be lying.

"Okay, have fun."

"And I might stop by Russia's." I quickly spat out before hurrying out the door. I ran down the steps and onto the sidewalk, hearing his shouts behind me, "Tell Belarus I said helloi!"

I basically sprinted to his house, makings sure not to run into anybody. Strangely, when I got there, Germany's door was open. And when I say strange, I mean it was worrisome strange. He never just leaves his front door wide open like this.

"Germany?" I asked to the open air, stepping inside. The door creaked open, the sunlight casting my long shadow in front of me. It was eerie, being in this house without that German here. Stirred up some bad memories and feelings.

Pushing that aside, I looked around for any signs of him or why the door would be left open like that. But I couldn't find anything. His record in the living room kept replaying the same weird sound over and over, and I quickly stopped it. Germany never upgraded his music to the kind now, at least not the kind always filling his home.

With the house still and quiet, it was spooky. There was always sound in this house, I've never heard nothing.

"Ger-man?" I checked the rest of the house and didn't find him. Everything was in order, cleaned up, and put away as it normally was. No sign of a struggle or a fight, or any reason why the door would be left wide open as it was. Which worried me even more. Nothing like that happens on accident with him, I know that.

When I couldn't find Germany, I looked around for my phone. It wasn't in the living room, nor the kitchen, or the bathroom. I stood in the hallway at the base of the stairs, trying to think where else it could have ended up. If Germany had found it, he would have

stopped by and dropped it off. Or would have placed it somewhere obvious.

I rubbed my chin and looked around. My eyes settled down on the huge rectangular silver mirror that hung in his hallway. I always had a funny feeling about that mirror, just something about it stirred up some deep feeling in me. I never figured it out, so I decided to ignore it.

Like I always do, I focused on my sunglasses when I saw my reflection. It was a frail yet effective way to cover my eyes. Inconspicuous yet obvious enough not to stir suspicion. In all except Russia.

I still can't believe he tore off my glasses as he had. He was drunk, sure, but I still didn't believe it. He had wanted to see my eyes, he was so curious he was willing to act on it with no thought. Which makes me worried about how sober Russia would act when he really wanted to see my eyes. He must really want to, too.

He said they were weird. And he liked weird.

And that look he gave me as he stared right into my eyes.

I snapped myself back into reality when I felt my heart starting to race. My cheeks just buzzed from the memory, and I couldn't tell if it's because of what he said, or the fact that I showed him my eyes.

I hope he doesn't remember that, either.

I glanced at that closet door and hesitated longer on it than I would have admitted to. Despite myself, I smiled. Then a sudden thought popped into my head. What if my phone was in there? I had checked everywhere else, including the room where I had slept in that chair with Russia on the bed. The closet was the only place I hadn't checked, yet.

Ignoring an amazing moment for a gay joke here, since no one was around, I walked to the closet and opened the door. Inside was just how we left it, the now visible boxes that were labeled to relate to their contents. Some hangers with faded clothing, nothing too

interesting to note. But an empty bottle of alcohol that Russia was drinking from was still sitting where he left it. Which means Germany hadn't cleaned in here. He must've not have thought to.

I grabbed the bottle, figuring I could put it on the counter for him to take care of himself and looked around for my phone. I was sitting on one of these boxes/bins that were stacked up, making myself taller and easier for Russia to kiss my neck.

I blushed at that remembrance, which only quickly turned into guilt once more. Why was I so conflicted about that moment, I enjoyed it! Drunk Russia seemed to as well, so why do I care?!

My phone buzzed and I heard it. Moving the stack of boxes out of my way just enough, I reached down and grabbed it. Another notification went off and it vibrated in my hand again.

Five missed calls and about 20 text messages.

Ignoring the other notifications from other sites, I checked the miss calls and seen that they were all from Germany. I can call him after I check the messages.

*Scary Ass Russian- We are having a big dinner and you will come. And after that, we need to talk.*

"Oof," I muttered to myself, standing in place in the closet. Russia didn't invite me over, he ordered me to come, basically. Cool. And the 'we need to talk' bit I'll worry about in a little bit. I just hope it isn't because he remembers.

*Jacksepticeye- Hmkbir, youe r funny. Und y r come.*

What the fuck?

*Unknown Number- Its Scotland, I got your number from Germany's phone. Ireland is drunk texting you right now, ignore him.*

That explains it. Wait, he's with Germany? Leaving the closet-it's against my gay nature to be in one for long-I typed out my message to Scotland and sent it to him.

*Cool dude- Yo Scotty Boy! Is Germany with you?*

I waited for a second for him to reply and decided to take care of the empty bottle that was still in my hand. Unsure what Germany would want to do with it, I set it down on the counter like I thought to and stood in place while I checked my other messages. A few from my parents saying that they'll be gone for the night and half of tomorrow. It's Canada's turn to make dinner, and don't cause trouble. Normal stuff. But the rest was from Germany.

*Ger-man- America I need your help! Something just happened at my house and it freaked me out, can you please come down by Ireland's.*

*Can you see if I closed my door? Don't go inside or anything, just stop by and close it for me?*

*Ame? Did you fall asleep?*

*You didn't go into the house, did you!*

*Please, I really need to talk to you! I almost got hit by a car.*

*Ame?*

*?*

*Ame wake up!*

*Klimsoem*

*Didn't mean 2 send zat, I don't know what that mean.*

*Hey.*

*Hey.*

*Ameeee?*

*Don't worry now, everythung is okayyyyyl. Me and green guy are sharing drinks, you should come still!*

A sudden chill went down my spine like a breeze came in through an open window. But, it couldn't have affected me if there even was

an open window. I was wearing my jacket, I wouldn't have felt it.

Nervously, I glanced around. Why would Germany tell me not to go in his house? Does it have to deal with him leaving his door open? Was he running from something? Is that what he meant by getting hit by a car? Did he run into the street? He wouldn't do something like that, he's way to cautious. Unless something really scared him. Something in the house?

It started to feel like eyes were watching me, fixed on my every move. It could've been from me getting inside my own head and freaking myself out, but I didn't want to find out either way. I had what I needed, I had no reason to stay.

As quickly as I could, I grabbed my shoes and quickly left the house, making sure to shut the door behind me. The chilling feeling disappeared as I heard the lock click behind me. Ignoring that, I put my shoes on-since Germany requires that everyone takes off their shoes at the door and checked my phone to see if Scot had answered.

*Unknown Number- Yeah, he's drunk with Ireland right now. I cut them off a few minutes ago. Don't worry, I'll take Germany home in a few minutes.*

*Cool Dude- Don't take him home, just drop him off at Russia's house because that's where I'll be.*

While I waited for his response, I added his number to my contacts and changed his name.

*Scrooge McDuck - That's a lot of work. Also, I don't know where he lives.*

*Cool Dude- Please, I'll owe you one. And I can send you his address.*

*Scrooge McDuck- Remember that you gave me an IOU.*

Slightly worried by the fact that he reminded me of that, I sent him the okay and Russia's address. If he was at Ireland's still, it would be a little while until he got there. I hope Ruski doesn't mind a hungover/drunk Germany staying for a little while. Nah, I'll just

remind him that that's what he did last night at Germany's.

I started my walk to Russia's house, whistling a tune that was stuck in my head. It was cold out, but despite that, I was pretty warm. Might just be my thick jacket though. I fluffed up my collar again, to make sure my hickeys were covered.

Shit!

I take my coat off whenever I go to anyone's house, including Russia's. What if he sees them and suddenly gets reminded? God, he'd probably hate me. What if he thinks I'm with someone? I could easily get away with it, but a part of me didn't like that. I want to be available, and for him to know it, just in case sober him isn't as straight as he claims.

And if he is, I know I could totally change that.

Deciding to just keep my coat on and claim that I was just cold, I looked up when I felt like I was getting close to his house. But a sight made me stop in my tracks.

Would it be weird if I said Russia was waiting outside for me?

I swallowed the lump in my throat and gave him my best smile. "Hey-o, Russia, man!"

He stood up from his seat on his front steps and returned my wave, albeit less exaggerated as I had done it. Okay, so far so good, he doesn't look angry and he isn't stomping his feet in anger, either.

"Amerrrica, glad to see you, again."

"Yeah, now that you aren't yelling at me."

"I voke up hungover in a girrrl's outfit, and didn't know wherrre I was. Kan you rrreally blame me?" He laughed, standing in front of me with his arms crossed. I rolled my eyes, knowing that it was funny to him but annoying to me a few hours ago. Either way, I still managed a chuckle.

"So wassup? I got your text." I shook my phone in my hand for

effect. He motioned for me to follow him and I did, walking into his house like always. Just, something about this time felt off to me. Like normally I wouldn't care too much about how his house looked and how he took care of it, but now it was the first things I noticed. Everything was cleaned, neat, and had a place. The shoes were lined up straight by the door, the floor was swept and the picture frames were straightened out.

"What happened after zat drrrinking kontest vith Germany? I kant rrremember lot, only pieces." Russia explained to me as he walked into the kitchen. I followed suit, trying to figure out what I was supposed to tell him. While I did that, he moved around the counter and stove area as he made the dinner he texted me about.

"Uhh, nothing much," I lied. "You were super clingy to me when you were drunk and refused to let me get off of your lap." I paused for a second then leaned against the counter and gave him my best cocky face. "It was almost like you loved me~."

Russia shot me a glare, but after he quickly looked away again.

I faked a hurt gasp and dramatically preformed my line, "Russia! That dejection! Oh, how it hurts!" I melt onto the counter, with a pouty lip and the back of my hand rested on my forehead.

"You'rrre such an idiot."

"Thank you."

"I rremember talking vith Japan, and seeing you in darrrk place."

I almost choked on air. Russia had his back turned to me still and thankfully didn't noticed my sudden jerk upwards. Think of an excuse, think of an excuse.

"Yeah, well, I don't know about that Japan convo," I told him the truth. I didn't know when they talked or what they had even talked about. Just that they did at some point. "And I slept in the chair next to the bed you were laying in."

Russia nodded along as I talked.

"You kept calling me 'Nice Country' again, and you were trying to get me to lay down with you. You sure you're not in love with me?"

"Keep saying zat and I'll kut out yourrr tongue," he waved his knife around and I leaned back, still smiling. I knew he was joking, he was smiling, too, but I didn't want to push it too much. He might actually try.

"Fine, fine. That's basically what happened, though."

He nodded, then pointed to my coat. "You know you kan take zat off."

I shrugged, trying to act casual and fluffed up my collar some more. "Im a little cold."

A timer went off and Russia moved from the counter to oven, grabbing some oven-mitts and bent over to take out whatever was in there. It smelled good, foreign, but good. Whenever I come over and stayed late, I eat dinner here so I was used to eating foods I never ate before. Whether it was good or bad, I still liked trying.

Russia pulled out some food from the oven and set it on the stove. The dish looked familiar, I must've had it here before, and it smelled good. Russia even hovered over it for a second, the steam rising off of it and curling around his face. He looked so pleased with himself and I found myself staring at him.

I looked away before he could notice though.

"Kan you hand me zat rrright zerrre?" He pointed to the role of tinfoil I had given to him a few weeks ago. I handed it to him and he set a sheet of it over the glass pan, covering the food and keeping the heat in. I pulled out a chair from the table and sat down, watching him move around his kitchen like clockwork. He grabbed another dish of some kind that was sitting on the counter and put it into the oven. He pulled out a pan and filled it up with water to boil that on the stove, and after moved to cut up veggies on the counter.

It was almost like he was in his own little world. And I had the

pleasure to see him in it. I also had the pleasure of seeing his ass. As he was moving around, his back was turned to me a lot, so I knew he wouldn't know.

"Rrrest of my siblings arrre koming over today."

I shook my head free of my thoughts and perked up slightly. "What?"

He hummed a yes and turned around to face me. "Zat's why I vanted you to stay forrr dinner. I mentioned you and some didn't believe zat I had made new komrrrade."

"Ouch, sibling love is something huh?" I chuckled, knowing how that is. Aussie and Zee can be jerks sometimes, but they mean well. Canada is the black sheep in that, though, he's the one always trying to be nice.

"Mhmm. So table vill be filled," he started to list off on his fingers, "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarrrus, Ukrrraine, Moldova, Georrrgia, Arrrmenia, Azerrrbaijan-"

"Azer-huh?"

"- Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turrrkmenistan, Kyrrrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Estonia is brrringing his boyfriend vith him, plus you'rrre herrre, and I'm planning forrr at least tvo otherrrs."

"Good plan. Germany is coming."

Just as I said that there was a knock on the door. Russia looked at me confused, still processing what I had said.

"Oil, ye glaikit (stupid) American! Coorie (Hurry) up an' tak' thes cheil (man), he's gonnae aff aw nonsensical!" Scotland yelled from behind the front door, extremely loud if I heard him all the way from the kitchen.

"Who is zat?" Russia asked, wiping his hands clean with a hand towel. I jumped to my feet before he could head to the door before me and left him there unanswered. Scot was waiting impatiently for me, his foot tapping and Germany hanging like a lifeless doll tucked

under his arm.

"Ich will los und für Messen jonglieren! (I want to go off and juggle for fairs!)" Germany threw his arms out and laughed to himself.

"Ah dunnae german, an' that's aw he chooses tae spick in. (I don't know German, and that's all he chooses to speak in.)" He handed Germany off to me, and I almost fell to my knees from the dead weight that a motionless German brought. Russia had walked up behind me, I felt his presence get really close, and he pulled me into the house.

"How do you know wherrre I live?" He asked, his voice that was once lighthearted now turned grave and deadly.

Scotland wasn't affected or shaken, like I would have been. He pointed to me then calmly answered, "Ask America. He's th' a body fe game me yer adress (one who gave me your address)."

He looked to me out of the corner of his eye and I nervously smiled. Germany yelled something I didn't understand and I slapped my hand over his mouth to keep him quiet. The less we could do to piss him off the better.

"Lose it." He looked back to Scotland, glaring daggers. Scot nodded and turned to leave, not even bothering to say anything to us. When he moved I saw Ireland laying down on the sidewalk, looking disheveled and obviously drunk. He was waving his arms around in the air like he was a baby grabbing at the space above its cradle.

Russia closed the door sharply and I jumped away from him, struggling to hold onto a squirming Germany.

"Why is he herrre?"

I wasn't sure if he was talking about Germany or Scot, so I hit the two birds with one stone by saying, "Uhh, something happened to Germany at his house and he somehow ended with Scot, who I told to bring him to me."

"Why not his own house?" Russia grabbed up Germany from me since I was struggling, holding him tucked under his own arm like

he was a bag of luggage rather than a country.

"I wanted to make sure he was okay. So I figured just stick him on the couch or something since when you got drunk you stayed in his extra room."

Russia looked at Germany then sighed, pinching between his eyes with his free hand. I smiled when I knew he knew I was right. "I'll let him stay herrre, but it'll be best if my siblings didn't see him."

"Why?"

Russia looked at Germany again and for a moment, a slight frown formed on his face but it was quickly evened out. "It just is."

I couldn't pry more than that out of him, and he told me to make sure the food doesn't burn. I didn't know how to cook what he was making, so I just sat down in the chair that I had been and made sure nothing caught on fire. Russia went upstairs to put Germany in a bedroom and lay him down to sleep.

He came back into the kitchen a few minutes later and got right back to cooking. And I got right back to watching him, trying not to be too obvious about it either. Even as I was doing that, I was wondering what had happened to Germany. I got little from his texts, just knowing that something had happened that caused him to leave his house without locking the door and maybe he ran into the road trying to get away.

Did someone try to attack him?

No, maybe not. I mean, some countries still hold a grudge based on what his dad did, but they'd know better than to attack him. It could start another war since everyone knows he's close friends with me and I'll kick anyone's ass if they tried to hurt him.

"Amerrrica!"

I looked up at Russia who was standing in front of me with his hands on his hips. I blinked a few times and looked up at him. "What?" I asked leaning forward in my chair.

"I asked you question."

"Sorry, just thinking."

"Hm, vell, I just asked if you vanted to help make zis," he held up a cookbook written in Russian. I looked at the picture and it showed a plate full of brown ball-shaped potato looking food.

"What is it?"

"Karrrtoshka." He smiled, turning the book back to him and running his hand across the page. "I know how to make zis by hearrrt, since I used to make it vith my-" he abruptly cut himself off, looking up from the page. "It doesn't matter, zey arrre good and you kan make zem vith vodka, too. Figurred you'd be interrrested."

He turned his back to me, setting the book down on the counter next to him. He was good at hiding pain, I could tell, but with me it was obvious. He would almost say things more often when he was with me than with others, and I have started to notice he talked more with me around. With anyone, his sentences were short and choppy.

Without much thinking, I stood up from my chair and wrapped my arms around his waist, giving him a hug. I felt him jump and move to push me away, but instead of going through with that, he set his hands over mine and gave them the slightest squeeze.

"I'd love to make those potato cakes with you."

"Zey arrre not potato kakes." Russia chuckled, slightly pushing my hands away so I could let him go. I did, reluctantly, and moved to stand beside him, saying, "They did look like potatoes, though."

He rolled his eyes, ignoring what I said and told me to get out what he would tell me to. I did as told; pulling out condensed milk, and butter from his fridge, grabbing a saucepan, biscuits, and cocoa powder. He read the instructions out loud, translating them for me of course, all while making whatever was in that big pan on the stove.

I had to blend some biscuits until they were crumbs, mix them with

cocoa, and added the butter Russia melted with the condensed milk. Then Russia's favorite drink was added in, and I made sure he didn't add too much to it. I mixed it all up until it looked like dough, which reminded me of making bread with my mom when I was little. How she loved her baguettes.

"Okay, what now?" I asked, showing off the dough I had made. Russia set his spoon down and came back over to me, not bothering to look at the book. "Add some valnuts, zey add morrre flavorrr. But make surrre you grrround zem down."

"Okay."

After I did that, he showed me how to get them into their shape. He took a small bit of the dough, rolled it into a ball, and grabbed some of the cocoa powder, rolling the ball into it. It looked simple, so I grabbed my own bit of dough and rolled it into a ball and in the cocoa. Russia watched from behind me as I did it, making sure I didn't mess it up. Even though it was easy.

Since he could let his other food sit for a while and cook on its own, he stood by me and helped me make the small little potato-shaped cakes. When they were in their shape we put it on a plate, since apparently, we didn't need to bake them like I assumed we needed to.

"You and your dad used to make these?"

Russia paused, halting his movement to grab some more dough. He cleared his throat then silently nodded, going back to grabbing dough.

"Sorry for asking, I just thought that's what you were gonna say earlier." I looked at him and seen that he was fixated on the small ball of dough in his hands, aggressively playing with it. I bit the inside of my lip, wondering if I should even have said anything.

Sparing a second glance up at him, I noticed that his eyes had started to water but his face was stone cold. He was holding back his tears, and I remembered when I had found him drunk and crying in his room. I didn't want him to feel to urge to hurt himself

again, so I set down my finished potato ball and turned my body to him.

"You know you can still talk to me, nothing has changed that."

He set down the dough and his shoulders slumped down. It took him a long moment before he turned to face me, keeping his head lowered. I waited a moment to see if he would do anything further before I took a step closer to him and set my hand on his arm. "It's okay to cry, you don't have to hold it in."

He looked up at me, his mouth slowly gaped open and his eyes filled with tears. He blinked, letting them stream down his cheeks before making a choking sound. I quickly grabbed him into a hug, pulling him down so his head was tucked under my chin. I had to stand on the tips of my toes to do that, and he had to bend down a lot but that didn't matter at the moment. He just needed to be comforted.

"Shhhhhh," I gently rubbed his back, trying my best to console him. His tears dripped off his cheeks and onto my neck and chest. For a moment I remembered he wasn't supposed to see my neck, but it was too late to turn back now. Hopefully, he doesn't notice the marks drunk him gave me.

Aaaand now realizing he's never been this close since then, oh god.

Forcing myself back to the present, I hugged Russia tighter. His hands dug into the back of my jacket, grasping tightly at it as he cried a little harder. Hearing a usually strong and well-steadied man break down like this, being reduced into a crying mess, made my heartache. I knew that this was only lightly touching the surface of the pain he hid, but if it was all he wanted to let out right now, I wasn't going to force him to do anymore.

After a few minutes, he let go of me, and sluggishly stood back up, keeping his eyes down on the floor. His eyes were reddened and he looked drained, his shoulders slumped down and his posture poor. I grabbed some dough and held it up to him.

"Maybe making these will help bring back good memories. So you

can help yourself heal."

He looked at me then weakly smiled, grabbing the dough and squishing it between his fingers. "Maybe. But it's memorrries I'm avoiding."

I grabbed the last of the dough and rolled it around in my palm. "Than, this can be a new memory." I gave him a smile showing off my dough potato. "To distract you for now."

Russia nodded placing his finished ball on the plate with the others, and I handed him mine so he could roll it in the cocoa powder. I looked at the powder and got an idea. Grabbing some from the bag, I held it in my palm and waited for Russia to turn back to me. When he did I took a deep breath and blew the powder at his face.

He yelped in surprise and tried to cover his face. I laughed loudly, whipping my hands free of the powder. What made it even better was that he sneezed loudly, the powder on his face flying off.

He seen me caught in a laughing fit and I saw him smirk before the force to which I was laughing had me close my eyes. I rubbed away a tear and looked back at him, leaving only a second to notice he had his hand held out by his mouth. Then suddenly all I saw was white as I felt a soft cloud cover my face.

I coughed and started to sneeze violently at the flour while Russia laughed loudly as I had. My glasses were coated in the powder and I cleaned them off with my sleeve, seeing the bag of flower now on the counter. I grabbed some while Russia was laughing and flicked it at his face. He grabbed a handful and threw a small bit back at me. I grabbed the bag and ran behind the kitchen table, hiding behind a chair. Then I grabbed a handful and threw it at Russia.

He ducked behind the table on the other side of me and I was happy he only had that handful while I had the entire bag. I felt some flour fall onto me, the white dust falling like snow. I peaked over the chair and saw the top of his hat and aimed some at it. But he suddenly jumped up and whipped the rest he had at my face. The sudden action made me jumped backward, but I slipped on something and fell onto my back. The bag of flour burst open and

suddenly all I saw was white.

Russia burst out laughing as I spat out the flour and shook it off of me the best I could. The bag had burst open, flour covering everywhere like a bomb had gone off. My entire body was covered, so I looked like a ghost.

"Zat vas best, I should have had kamera!" I heard Russia exclaim between loud laughter.

"Oi, if you had I would be fighting for that footage!" I got back onto my feet and looked at my covered body, trying to see how much I was covered. Every time I moved, a rain of flour dripped off of me like fog.

A smile curled onto my lips and I slowly looked back up at Russia, who had started to calm down now. "Russia~" I purred, holding up my arms. He had a goofy smile across his lips and was holding his stomach. "Give me a hug, buddy~"

That smile faltered and he back away from me, holding out his hands and shaking them back and forth, all while saying, "Nyet, Nyet, Nyet, don't you darrre."

I climbed onto the table quickly and jumped onto the floor in front of him. He took off running, and I chased him around the table.

"Russia, come give me a hug!" I teased in a sing-song voice, while he yelled no in Russian over and over again. When he got to the spot where the flour bag had exploded, he almost slipped and fell. I caught him in a tight hug, getting flour all over his clothes. He struggled to get out of my grip but I didn't let him go.

I laughed with him as we made a mess of the kitchen, getting flour everywhere and not really paying attention to anything other than this small messy moment. He stopped fighting me and just let my hug happen, allowing the white powder to get everywhere. He eventually startled me by jumping into the air, lifting me off my feet. With quick swift movements, he grabbed me and swung me around so I was in his arms bridal style.

"Whoa!" I exclaimed, quickly wrapping my arms around his neck so I didn't fall onto the ground.

He laughed, his arms shaking and causing me to bounce a little. I looked up at him, seeing him laughing in pure happiness cause my heart rate to increase. I hesitated to say a flirtatious comment, only because I just wanted to see him look like that for a few moments longer.

"What happened here?"

# Family Reunion

**Russia's POV**

It has been too long since the house was full. We had to pull up a few extra chairs to accommodate everyone at the table, all while leaving my father's place alone. Kaz was excited, constantly pulling random countries out of the room to go off and do whatever task he wanted. Ukraine was even smiling and having fun, but she was always looking to the door like she wanted to leave. Or like she was expecting someone else to come.

I was in the kitchen alone, having chased everyone out when they started to get in my way. Belarus kept trying to sneak food along with Azerbaijan, Kaz was talking excitedly-when he does that his wings move around and knock things over-and America was just sitting down watching me cook, but I kicked him out, too.

"Everyone is speaking another language, and I don't understand any of it," America's voice came closer from behind me.

"Что не так с этим? (What's wrong with that?)"

"Well fuck you, too, sir."

I laughed, putting the finishing touches on one of the foods. It was Uzbekistan's favorite. From what I could remember, at least. I hadn't made this dish in a long while, so I may have messed up. Even if I did, it's still edible and it'll be eaten. Back during the fighting, we had little food so we learned to eat what we could get our hands on, never letting anything go to waste even if it didn't taste good. That's how my dad came up with those 'potato cakes' as America had put them. We used to use stale cake mix or bread, but now I use biscuits. Plov won't be that extreme, but it's hard to give up old habits.

When I turned around to start setting the table with food, I saw that America was standing really close. I almost bumped into him and

he quickly backed away.

"Sorry, man, I was just trying to see what you were making this time," He quickly stammered out, adjusting his glasses and trying to hide his embarrassed face. I tilted my head, quickly examining his odd reaction. Something about it tugged in my chest, a familiar feeling trying to emerge. But I couldn't place an actual explanation to it, so I ignored it for now.

"You'll see when ve eat. Forrr now, go away I got to set table."

"Can I help?"

I set the pan down and raised an eyebrow. He sure was acting strange, insistent on being by me. I noted that earlier when we had that flour fight. I had picked him up to restrain him, but he did that himself by holding onto me tightly. And then when Finland and Estonia walked in and asked what happened, America refused to be put down. Then he didn't want to leave me alone to cook.

"Do you vant something frrrom me?" I crossed my arms and kept my puzzled look. He shifted on his feet, switching his weight from one foot to the other. My stance must be putting him off. Trying not to be obvious, I lost my intimating manor. Even with that, he still looked nervous and distraught.

"I." He sighed and rubbed his neck. I watched his hand intensely. He had been doing that a lot today, too. And he still had his jacket on him, like he was purposely trying to hide his neck. Did something happen to him?

"I just want to help, that's all Ruski."

I knew that wasn't the full truth, but I'll let it slide for now. I've got food to take care of.

"Fine, take down some plates and set zem up."

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We all laughed at a joke that Kaz had made. It was nice to see him looking as happy as he did, even if we had to restrain his wings.
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Kaz didn't mind, he was actually making jokes about it saying that we were kidnapping him.

America was laughing, only because I became his personal translator. He charmingly called me 'Google Translate', and I forced myself to ignore it. Or I would've hit him, which I didn't feel like doing since my arms were tired.

Despite language difficulties, everything seemed to have been going fine. Although I found it weird that Ukraine was still more interested in the door than her family, but Ukraine wasn't ever really interested in us anyway. Even when dad was alive, she would always try and go off with this one girl whose name I never caught. Whatever happened to her was beyond me.

"Итак, ты не шутил, когда сказал, что дружишь с ним, да? (So, you weren't joking when you said you were friends with him, huh?)" Moldova laughed to herself, getting a few stifled ones from the others. I rolled my eyes, knowing she was just trying to pick on me.

"Ta pole temaga lihtsalt sõbrad, vaata neid. (He's not just friends with him, look at them.)" Estonia pointed to America and I. I looked down at us to see what would suggest we weren't friends. He was leaning close to me, expecting a translation, and I wasn't giving any posture that would say I didn't like him by me.

"Что вы имеете в виду? (What do you mean?)"

"I'm so lost." America went to eating his food.

"Te, kutid, näete pigem paari asemel kui sõbrad (You guys look more like a couple rather than friends,)" Estonia explained.

I jumped slightly, my eyes widening. America noticed that, setting his hand on my arm and asking, "What's wrong?"

I looked to everyone else, hoping that someone would object but instead the ones who were paying attention nodded. It looked like they had realized it, too, and agreed. America was still looking up at me, confused, with his hand on my arm. I pushed his hand away

and refused to look at him.

"Zey zink ve look like kouple," I told him, glancing out of the corner of my eye to see his reaction. He looked at me then to the others before he got that devilish smile again. He threw his arms around me, pulling me down slightly so his cheek was smushed against mine.

"Awww, Ruski we should tell them.~"

"What arrre you talking about." I tried to push him away but he wouldn't budge.

"Guys, we are a couple!" He laughed, horribly holding up a serious demeanor to make what he was saying convincing. By then I'm sure everyone knew he was joking and that we weren't actually dating.

"Я не могу понять все, что он говорит, что это. (I can't understand all he's saying, what is it?)" Moldova asked Estonia, and he explained to everyone. I guess America forgot that a lot of my siblings don't speak a lot of English. But when they were able to understand, they started laughing at me. I rolled my eyes and fought back a smile. If America saw me laughing and playing along, he wouldn't stop.

"Is that why he has those marks on his neck, Russia?" Finland raised a brow at me.

"Yeah, surrre whatever-vait what do you mean?" I looked up from my forkful of food to see what he meant. America had let go of me and quickly covered his neck with his hands, avoiding eye contact with me. I knew he was hiding something, but he just wouldn't tell me. Whatever it was I couldn't tell or see.

"Those were just made at a party," America quickly waved off trying to stuff his face with his food. Even though he was avoiding conversation, Georgia was pleased that he was eating from his favorite dish. I recognized it as trying not to speak. The party was last night, and I knew for certain he didn't have them beforehand. He must've gotten them after my drinking contest with Germany since I don't recall any way he could have gotten them before then.

"Who made zem?" I turned to him, resting my elbow on the table and one hand on the back of my chair. America popped his lips, and took his time with his food before mumbling, "can't say."

Estonia whispered the translations to Latvia who then passed the whispering down like it was a game of telephone. I ignored that, knowing very well that if there is drama, my siblings will either ignore and try to separate themselves from it, or become way too interested.

"Kan't or von't?"

"Yes."

"Zat's not apprrroprrriate ansver."

"Fine, the person who made it was drunk."

"Okay, zat still leaves fourrr people."

"I'll tell you later."

"No, tell us now." Kaz broke in, not really realizing he did. I gave him a look, but that didn't make him lose his interest. America also noticed in the small break that about half of everyone was staring and waiting for the next move. The other half were talking amongst themselves not really caring.

Before anything could be done, however, the doorbell rang. Ukraine jumped from her seat and hurriedly ran out of the room to the door. My attention was stolen when I thought about who that could have been. And if this is why she's been waiting for the door all evening.

"Everyone," Ukraine walked back to us slowly after a few minutes, pausing in the doorway. She patted down her skirt and then played with the ribbons of her flower crown nervously. A taller figure approached behind her just as she said, "this is my boyfriend, Canada."

"Hello." Canada waved, a worried smile on his face.

I narrowed my eyes at him, and when he noticed I saw him quickly

become panicked and shuffled on his feet. America hit my arm and I looked away, catching the confused eyes of Moldova. She nodded behind me and shook her head no. She didn't approve either.

After a few sentences exchanged between them and everyone at the table, they headed back to where Ukraine was sitting. Canada moved ahead of her to pull out her chair for her. She smiled politely and sat down, patting the empty chair next to her for him to sit at. I studied his movements, noticing quite well he was tense and could feel my soul-piercing stairs.

What about Mexico?

Canada looked up at me and quickly back down when my death glare didn't change.

"Hey, Ruski?" America tapped my shoulder and I looked down at him, lessening my frown only a little bit. He glanced at his brother when he heard him and Ukraine laughing at something. "Would you mind dialing down on the 'I'm planning your murder in my head' look?"

"Yes, I would mind."

"Okay wall," he sighed and shook his head, "why are you planning on killing my bro? He's nice, and would treat her well."

I looked over at the two, seeing Ukraine smiling as she was. I'd like to believe she can do that all her own, but I haven't seen it lately. And I know Canada wasn't a bad country but that doesn't mean I'd approve. And I don't understand. Ukraine barely even knew who he was a month ago. Why did she want to date him?

And America told me Canada left with Mexico last night, so what happened in that time to make him want to date my sister? Did he just suddenly forget that Mexico basically sang his heart and soul out to him?

We continued with dinner, and when we got to the desserts America was proud to show off the Картошка. I laughed at the idiotic way he was acting and showing off the small cakes like they

were gold. It was funny the way he spoke in his announcer's voice, trying to pronounce everyone's names correctly then handing each two. At least he was trying to say their names, instead of the mumbles he was saying earlier when we were setting the table.

"Thank you, America." Lithuania managed to say. America smiled, then looked to me. Without saying anything, I responded in Lithuanian, "prašom."

"Prašom?" America slowly repeated.

Lithuania smiled brightly and happily ate his treat. Starting with just him, America wanted to say 'you're welcome' in each countries native tongue so he asked how to do it. Once I told them all what he wanted to do, they all happily taught him how to say the phrase. I smiled watching him try his best with each pronunciation and patience with himself.

"Here ya go Ruski." He handed me mine, bowing down and extending his offering hand as if he were bestowing a precious jewel to me. I shook my head from his childish behavior and took the small ball.

"Спасибо. (Thank you.)"

"Пожалуйста. (Your welcome.)"

I looked at him momentarily caught off guard by his sudden use of Russian. "You arrre just full of surrrprrrises arrren't you?"

He smiled at me, pointing to his right eye and said, "I'm winking under my sunglasses."

I rolled my eyes, popping one of the cakes into my mouth. The cocoa and vodka made an interesting combination, but I was used to it and enjoyed it. Why he didn't just lift up his sunglasses was still beyond me. I wanted to just take those off and see what was under them, but a new gut feeling told me not to. And if my gut says not to, then I won't.

"Cine face mâncăruri de data asta?(Who's doing dishes this time?)"

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After we all were done, Ukraine actually volunteered to clean up the mess. As long as Canada helped her, that is. He was happy to, but I was suspicious. Kaz still had the energy to spend, sending him in there would keep him busy and he would be able to keep an eye on them.

Meanwhile, the rest of us had gathered in the living room, passing the time with games that we all could play. I wasn't too interested, I was pretty tired from the entire day cooking and handling nosy and bothersome siblings. At this point, all I wanted was to sleep.

"Paskutinį kartą tavo Baltija, o ne Šiaurės(For the last time, your Baltic, not Nordic,)" Lithuania argued with Estonia, who was cuddled up next to Finland and was trying once again to deny his heritage.

"Ma olen mis iganes than. (I'm whatever I want.)" Estonia stuck out his tongue, Finland wrapping his arms around his boyfriend in a supportive hug.

"Hyväksyn sinut pohjoismaiseksi. (I'll adopt you as Nordic.)" He rested his chin on top of Estonia's, making him smile brightly.

"Nemainīs viņu par to, ka viņš ir Baltijs. (Won't change him from being Baltic.)" Latvia shook his head at his brother's.

"What in the hey are they saying?" America leaned to me, pointing to the three bickering brothers, still going on that same subject that they have been for years.

"Oh, Estonia is perrrsistent on ditching his brrrotherrrs to be Norrrdic," I explained to him, and he nodded. But I saw his eyebrows furrow in confusion again.

"You mean all you guys? Cause, heh. Ya' kinda made it sound like he's not your brother."

"I mean, not rrreally?"

"Wait, you guys aren't all related?"
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I bit my tongue, not wanting to say much of anything else. This get together was supposed to be friendly, with no arguments or anything (beyond the regular sibling stuff). If I continue, one might start.

"No. Why is that surprising?" Armenia didn't notice, or care for, America's surprise.

"I mean, you all have the same Dad."

"Biologically not." Georgia, who was separated from all of us sitting on a chair by a window, spoke up. He was always like that whenever we all got together, sitting away from us and usually texting his friends. Once in a while he'd chat with Azer, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, or Ukraine, but ignored the rest of us.

"USSR, he took a lot of us when we were young."

I could tell he was trying to put it kindly.

"Okay, well then who is all related?"

I noticed everyone's looks to me, to the others they didn't necessarily get along with and I could feel old tensions rising again. And America was oblivious to it or ignored it. Either way, I was stopping him.

"Hey, Amerrrica I need to talk to you." I grabbed him by his jacket and yanked him off the couch, ignoring his protests and exclaims of pain. Without looking to meet anyone's eyes, I marched him upstairs, barely letting him get onto his feet.

"Ow, what the hell Russia?" America pulled himself free from my hand, falling out of his jacket and landing on the floor by my feet. He took a second to stand up then I grabbed him by the collar of his shirt, leading him to the end of the hallway where we could talk in privet and out of earshot.

"Ve don't talk about zat, " was the first thing I said to him. He looked at me, rubbing his shoulder and adjusting his glasses.

"I just thought that it would have been okay, they were answering

my questions." He argued back, eyeing his jacket and trying to adjust the collar of his shirt to cover up his neck. It didn't, not even close to what he wanted.

"It's still touchy." I handed him his jacket and he quickly took it, slipping it back on. I watched as his slim fingers puffed up the collar, the fur covering his white skin and the obvious hickies left by the nameless person. I frowned when I got a good look at them. Who the hell made them?

"Who vas it?"

"Hmm?"

I pointed to his neck and I saw his face buzz a light red. The curious cat in me stepped a little closer, trying to analyze his reaction to my seemingly random question. Whoever had done it, he was embarrassed to say. And since he only seemed to be on top of hiding them around me, whoever it was I must know.

"Can't say."

"Da, you kan."

"Fine, I won't."

I stepped closer, knowing he'd jump back. When he did, the wall prevented him from going any closer. Finding himself trapped between me and a hard place, I knew he'd crack. He's always found my squared up stance intimidating, especially when I don't give him the chance for any mental preparations.

The only other question I had was for myself: Why the hell did I even care?

"Who did it?"

"You did!" He spat out, clearly startled.

My eyebrows furrowed in confusion. "What do you mean?"

America sighed, rubbing his neck and lowered his head. "Drunk

Russia was dared to play Seven Minutes In Heaven with me. A game where two people get locked in a closet for seven minutes and they do whatever."

I noticed how red and increasingly nervous he got. My own cheeks buzzed from the realization that I was the one who made those marks on his neck. And with that fuzzy memories came back to me, more of that dark place with America standing close to me.

"Japan was just joking around with us and then you did what she said."

I kept my mouth shut and hoped my silence would urge him further. But he didn't say anything beyond that, implying to me that what he was telling me was either upsetting or highly embarrassing. Oh, God. He must feel like I took advantage of him.

"I'm sorry," I backed away from him to give him some space. He looked up at me confused like I shouldn't have said what I did. "I shouldn't have done zat, even if I vas drunk, I-"

"Don't feel sorry, it wasn't your fault. And I didn't stop you anyway, so don't be hard on yourself."

My eyebrow twitched when I heard what he said.

"What do you mean you didn't stop me?"

"Uhhhhh," he gritted his teeth and hesitated long enough for me to get an idea. One that I didn't necessarily want to be true, but couldn't find myself hating either. Exactly why America was staling wasn't easy for me to guess, I was too embarrassed myself. So when he turned his head up towards the ceiling and said, "Insert distraction here please", I figured he was just as unsettled as me.

"Russland? Amerika?"

I turned around and seen a stumbling Germany come towards us. He was rubbing his eyes and his clothes were slightly dishevel. As I had noted before, the white sleeves of his dress shirt were torn at the elbows and some red stains were faintly around the tears. I had also noted the scrapes seen through the fabric but hadn't questioned

them. He was drunk when he arrived, and Germany can get careless.

"That actually worked?"

I ignored America and walked over to Germany, choosing to forget the whole drunk hickey talk. Have to remember not to get drunk around America again.

"Vere am I?" He muttered, leaning against the wall to steady himself. His eyes were still glossy and had formed deep bags. He should have slept longer and he shouldn't have gotten up.

"Kome on Gerrrmany, let's get you back to bed." I grabbed his arm and draped it over my shoulders so I could drag him. He made a few grunts but didn't do anything else to prevent my actions.

"Hungry...," he managed to say before I got too far.

"We have plenty of leftover food, and I know for a fact that hungover Germany doesn't care what he eats," America suggested walking up behind me. I turned to him, slightly fighting against the resistance that Germany brought with dragging his feet. "We can just take him downstairs-"

"Nyet, zat's not good idea." I quickly shot him down.

"What why?"

I looked at Germany and knew that my siblings would see his twin. We all had become close to her, our father taking her in after her father died. She was treated like a part of the family, even if she was more closely monitored and wasn't allowed to have contact with anyone unless Dad allowed it.

"Rrreasons." I pulled Germany off of me and passed him to America. "I'll go get some food, just go lay him back down. He looks like zombie."

Downstairs everyone had moved on from my abrupt leave with America and were busy doing whatever. Estonia gave me a wave to at least acknowledge my passing through. I returned his greeting

and wordlessly went into the kitchen.

"-you have to promise not to tell anyone."

Ukraine noticed I walked into the kitchen and quickly stopped talking. Canada saw me and I gave him a narrowed-eyed look until he looked away and went back to cleaning the dishes. There were a lot of them so it would take a long while to complete them all.

"Hey, what you want?" Kaz asked as he put the dried dishes away. I noted the interestingly hushed topic and filed it away for later. The faster I can get Germany to be quiet and out of sight the better.

"Grrrabbing some leftoverrrs."

"But we ate," Kaz chuckled to himself and shook his head. "Сіз бір аш ел болуыңыз керек. (You must be one hungry country.)"

My eye roll was his answer. Ukraine kept looking at me from the corner of her eye and I pretended not to notice. She was definitely hiding something and something that I wasn't meant to know. And with how difficult she can be, I wasn't going to get the answers to that any time soon, or in any easy way.

"RYTŲ VOKIETIJA JŪS GRĮŽTĖS! (EAST GERMANY YOU'RE BACK!)"

A loud crash and some blurred together voices fallowed. I inhaled sharply and whipped my head around to look at the kitchen doorway. I couldn't see anything across the hall other than a few countries standing and gathering around something out of sight.

"Ол жай айтты ма? (Did he just say?)" Kaz's shoulders slumped down and his wings lowered. Ukraine was just like him, stuck in a shock that was mixed with some painful feeling hidden deep with the past years.

Without another word, we all ran into the living room. On the floor, Germany was caught in a tackle hug by Lithuania, who had failed to see his mistake. I could see the disappointment on everyone as they all shamefully looked away.

It wasn't her.

"Vat's going on?" Germany quickly tried to pry himself away from Lithu's grasp, who looked up in confusion when he heard a different voice. He scrambled off of him, Estonia helping him to his feet.

"Atsiprašau, pamaniau, kad esi kažkas kitas. (I'm sorry, I thought you were someone else.)" He muttered, keeping his head low. I frowned the heavy feeling in my chest pressing down. I couldn't blame him for what he did, I had made the same mistake a few times before. They were twins, with only a few differences. I'd see Germany sitting and reading a book and I had the urge to wave hi and greet him like family. I always held it back. So I avoided him as much as I could, which was difficult with the small friendship we had formed over the years.

Germany had leaped up to his feet and was hiding behind a startled America. No doubt he didn't understand anything that was said by anyone, but he looked like he didn't need to know to get a sense of what just happened.

"Gerrrmany, zerrre is food in the kitchen forrr you." I motioned to the other room, where I had left his food. "I'll meet you in zerrre."

Germany eyed everyone around him, scared that he was going to get pounced on again, and stiffly hurried out of the room. Everyone watched him, the tone deathly still and quiet. America looked up at me then at my siblings. From the frown on his face and his lowered shoulders, he felt bad about everything. I resisted the feeling to comfort him, and instead settled for letting him sit like that for a little while. So he could understand why I shouldn't be objected or defied when it comes to what's best for my family.

"You kan take brrreak," I told Ukraine and Kaz, not even bothering to glare at Canada. Then I walked into the kitchen.

His back was to me, the first thing I noticed about Germany when I walked into the room. I could see the plate of food was close by him, even if it was pushed aside the slightest bit. Then in a weak voice, he asked, "zey zought I vas mien zisder?"

My eyes lowered and I nodded, knowing he couldn't see me. "Da."

"I didn't know zat vould haben."

"It's fine."

"Nien. It isn't, und vu know it." He turned his head slightly just enough to see me in the corner of his eye. "I schould haffe schtayed up zere as vu und America zaid."

I hesitated on my reply. It was somewhat comforting to know now that America just didn't listen to me, it was Germany who didn't want to comply.

"Gerrrmany," I walked next to him and sat down in the seat next to him. He looked miserable, with the faint sign of tears in the corner of his eyes. "Ve verrre close vith her, da, but it's over. Most ve kan do is move on." I glanced over at my father's chair and then back at Germany. I couldn't hold this against him, or my siblings. Not if I'm just the same.

"If its any consolation-" I turned around to see America slowly walking up behind us, nervously fiddling with his hands "-I understand all this, and I feel bad."

Germany nodded absently, his expression I had worn too many times. This was usually when I'd break into a bottle of vodka, but I decided against it. Not until America was gone.

"And," the country continued and pulled out his phone. "I have Poland on speed dial for situations similar to this."

A small smile returned to Germany and looked at me. "Er ist ein interessantes Land. (He's an interesting country.)"

"Это один из способов выразиться.(That's one way to put it.)" I continued with the small effort to bring a lighter mood to the atmosphere.

"Don't think I don't understand you," America spoke a little louder, but fully going back into his sass. "I ain't that much of a clueless foreigner."

How much Russian did he know?

I thought about that as Germany stood to give him a hug. America grabbed him, tucking him under his chin and wrapping his arms around him protectively. It wasn't out o the realm of possibility for him to know German, he basically took Germany in as family when our father took his sister.

I decided to test out whether or not America actually knew Russian, or was just bullshitting me. "Америка (America,)" I extended the 'r' sound to catch his attention in a different fashion. "Почему бы тебе не дать мне бутылку водки, и мы посмотрим, что еще может произойти? (Why don't you give me a bottle of vodka and we can see what else can happen?)"

"Оу, я знал, что я тебе нравлюсь, Руски~ (Awww, I knew you liked me, Ruski~.)" He purred in my direction, Germany looking up at us confused. "Но я не думаю, что трезвый, тебе бы это слишком понравилось. (But I don't think sober you would like that too much.)"

I nodded approvingly. The country did know his Russian. A little different than fluent, but worded pretty close to it. Where did he learn it was the question.

"How'd vu learn Ruzian zo vell?" Germany asked for me, pulling himself away from America. He shrugged and shoved his hands in his pockets.

"My dad knew some phrases, I learned from Russia's dad, and I have an app on my phone so I can perfect it now." He looked at me, waiting for me to question or say anything.

Ignoring the part about my father, I said, "it's not bad at all. Why didn't you tell me you kould underrrstand me?"

"Eh, only really focused on it recently. Plus I wanted to surprise you." He walked over to me, standing behind my chair with his hand rested on the top. "Did it work."

Yes, my thoughts said.

"Nyet." My mouth said.

"I feel offended." America joked.

There was a pause and I noticed Germany was looking to me then to America. He had that face he makes when he's starting to come up with an idea. I recognized it so well and knew that it usually led to trouble. His sister had the same look.

"What is it?" I nodded my head to him.

"Chust zinking is all." He flashed me a smile and I could see that his teeth where oddly coming to a sharp point. I knew about his teeth, he got them from his dad, and he usually sands them down. But they were becoming slightly pointed again.

I faked a yawn, which strangely brought up a feeling of sleepiness, and rubbed the bottom of my teeth. Germany got the signal and held his hand over his mouth, trying to be inconspicuous as possible.

"Ya' getting tired there, Ruski?" America tilted his head, poking my cheek. He hadn't noticed what I told to Germany, which may be good. I don't know if America knew about his teeth, but Germany did want very little people knowing. He can tell him on his own.

"Da, tirrred of you."

"Ouch."

I smiled, proud of myself just a little bit, but did feel a little tired. But I had to find out how the others were doing before I did anything else. I told the two what I was doing and then walked into the living room. Instantly I looked for Lithuania, only to find him smiling and laughing with Latvia as they teased Estonia. Finland had his arm around him, laughing with the two. Ukraine was sitting on the couch with Canada and Kaz, talking to each other. When they saw me, Ukraine quickly grabbed Canada's hand. I assume to just aggravate me.

"ჰეი, რუსეთი. (Hey, Russia.)"

I turned to see Georgia. He had on his coat and had just waved bye to Azerbaijan. "გამოვდივარ გარეთ, რაღაც ადგილზე მაქვს წასასვლელი ხვალ. (I'm going to head out, I got someplace to go tomorrow.)"

I nodded, understanding his excuse, whether it was true or not. I knew Georgia leaving would mark that start for others to follow, but I wanted to see how many people were staying.

"Сколько осталось? (How many are staying?)" I didn't make an effort to make my question subtle.

A few hands rose; Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania, while the others decided not to. Now I knew how much I had to make for breakfast tomorrow.

Ukraine took Canada back into the kitchen to finish cleaning, and I had Kaz fallow them in again. Something about Ukraine's demeanor felt off to me, and it didn't seem right. Belarus pulled me aside before I could really get caught in thought again, and forced me to join a conversation with her and Kyrgyzstan.

After a while, America popped his head into the living room as I was in the middle of saying bye to Moldova. She gave me a hug, and when she noticed the other country, she said in my ear, "Urmărește-l. Am impresia că vei dori. (Watch that one. I have a feeling you're gonna want to.)"

"какие (What?)" I looked down at her confused, and I glanced over at America to make sure he wasn't doing anything obvious to cause trouble.

Moldova laughed and shook her head, adjusting her coat and walking backward to leave. "Vei vedea (You'll see,)" she winked and left, not giving me an answer.

"Psst. Ruski."

I looked over at America. The majority of his body was behind the wall, his head down to his shoulders sticking out. I glanced down at his neck, seeing the hickies that I allegedly left him. For a moment I

tried to remember what happened. But everything was just fuzzy. One thing did stick out to me though, me holding America's glasses in my hand.

"Is it okay for Germany to go back upstairs?" He refocused my attention back onto him. No one was paying attention, might as well now.

I nodded, and after a second Germany fallowed behind America as they tried to head for the staircase while being unseen. It obviously wouldn't work, but it would hurt more if I tried to hide him.

"Germany." Lithuania stood up from his seat on the couch and quickly walked over. Germany tensed up at his name, slowly turning to face him while holding his hands close to his chest. He was still nervous I could see.

Lithuania stood in front of him as if he momentarily forgot what he was going to say. So he settled for, "Atsiprašau, jei jus įskaudinau. Aš tiesiog maniau, kad tu esi, žinai. (I'm sorry if I hurt you. I just thought you were, you know.)"

Germany looked a little confused, and once I translated what he said, he nodded, understanding what he meant. "It's okay. I'm zorry for dizabointing vu."

America looked up at me and I caught his line of sight. When I looked to him, he quickly looked away, focusing on the extended hand that Lithu held.

"Don't speak sorry, your sister was good. You too."

Germany nodded and shook his hand. Lithuania's English may not be good, but his key words are what mattered. And Germany seemed to understand.

"Do vu- um," he let go of his hand and adjusted his tie, " do vu zink vu can tell me more apout her?"

I looked to everyone else and they all wore the same bittersweet expression. Latvia went up to Germany and grabbed his nervously twitching hands, bringing him to the couch. I stood in my place,

distancing myself from the others, not wanting to break apart their attempt at healing. They all needed it, the Baltic boys were closer with East Germany than any of us.

And Germany needed closure.

"Does this happen all the time?"

I blinked away my watery eyes and looked down at America. He was now standing beside me, his arms crossed, and looking ahead at the others on the couch. He moved his head in my direction slightly and added, "you guys try to avoid everything that happened?"

I looked down at the ground, shuffling my feet. "Da. Past isn't good, so ve ignorrre it. Zat's why I vanted to hide Gerrrmany."

Estonia's laugh made me perk my head up. Germany was seated between Lithuania and Latvia with Belarus next to them, with Estonia, Finland, and Armenia, on the other couch across of them. Kyrgyzstan was sitting on the floor, holding up his phone and making weird faces, poking fun at whatever was on the screen. They all seemed to be happy or relieved more like.

"But maybe zat wasn't rrright. Maybe zey needed to face zat."

"What about you?"

I raised an eyebrow and looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"Dont you need closure like that?" America pointed to Germany, who looked to be in the middle of a story. He had a smile on his face, and the ones around him were leaning in to listen.

"I need sleep, zat's what I need." I turned to head upstairs, but America grabbed my arm. I paused and looked down at him. He didn't let go and instead grabbed my hand and dragged me behind him.

"No, you need a laugh, that's what you need." He counteracted my previous statement, looking over his shoulder to smile at me. I rolled my eyes, seemingly having no choice but to fallow him.

My siblings laughed once again, but this time when I looked over at them, they were looking at me. I blinked in confusion but then realized that I probably looked comedic as I was being dragged by a smaller country.

He let go of my hand and I instinctively reached out to grab it again. But he moved to fast for me, which I was thankful for. 'Why did I even do that?' I wondered to myself as he opened the front door and lead me outside.

"It's gotten pretty chilly, hasn't it?" America immediately wrapped his arms around himself and pulled his jacket closer to him. I looked around, feeling the slight breeze but it wasn't too bad.

"Not rrreally, actually." I shrugged sitting down on the steps. He looked at me, seeing my thin shirt and pants and scuffed.

"That's because you're a cold country, show-off." America laughed as he sat down next to me. I looked up at the sky, the dark view overhead void of any stars. Clouds must be covering them, which is a shame. I liked seeing the stars.

"You know, I once saw a UFO."

"Shut up." I shoved his shoulder, thinking his claim to be incredibly stupid.

"No really, I was walking home late at night and then all of a sudden WOOSH!!" He threw his arms into the air to mimic and path the aircraft apparently took. "It zoomed right over me, and it, like, hovered for a good few seconds before disappearing up into the sky."

"Yourrr so stupid."

"Why? You don't believe me?"

"Of courrrse not!" I chortled, giving him another astonished look. "Why vould I believe half zings you say?"

America shrugged and looked up at the stars. In this lighting, I could see how deep his face looked. In the sense that he seemed

tired himself, but was trying not to show any signs of it.

"Because it's nice to believe in something, even if it ain't true. Adds something to a rather boring memory."

The corner of my lips tugged downwards and I nodded in agreement. He had a point, even if how he acted it out was ridiculous. Even so, I didn't find anything wrong with it.

"But I really did see a UFO."

I laughed and he tried his best to keep up a deadpanned expression, but with how tight he was keeping his lips pressed, he was struggling with not laughing.

"Whatever you say, Amerrrica." I sighed and turned back to the sky. That's an interesting thought to have. Seeing something otherworldly, no one else around you to even confirm it. It's like the thing chose you, only you, to present itself to. It would be an honorable feeling to carry, but that would quickly be tarnished by everyone's skepticism.

How would one live with that?

Especially America, he would blab about it constantly. I thought about that more and smiled to myself. He didn't see anything. He just wanted to make me laugh.

I felt a weight get place on my shoulder and I looked down. America had his mouth ajar and his head was leaned against me, slight snoring noises coming from him.

"Heh. And I was one who vanted to go to bed." I shook my head and looked up at the sky again. The clouds moved and the light from the moon poked through. It wasn't enough to light up the entire street, but it still created a peaceful ambiance.

America groaned and shifted, turning his head so his cheek was pressed against me and he wrapped his arm around my waist loosely. I jumped and felt a spark of electricity shoot down my back. I quickly tried to move him off of me, but when I lifted him up he fell back down right into my lap.

I gasped in surprise and that, or me moving him, woke him back up. He lifted his head and quickly spat out, "I'm awake, I swear!"

"Good, now can you move?" I bite the inside of my lip.

America looked up at me and seen where he was laying. But instead of getting up, he stretched out his arms and tucked them under his head, making himself comfortable on my lap.

"Deal with it."

Then he went quiet, refusing to move or say anything when I tried to get his attention. It was irritating, but I didn't do anything else. Instead, I leaned back and looked at him, trying to sleep soundly the best he could. I could feel him shivering, and he was trying his best not to.

"You'rrre kold."

"Shhh, I'm sleeping."

"Let's go inside."

"No." He wrapped his arms around my leg and held on tight. I tried to move him, but he wouldn't budge. "Let me sleep, Ruski."

"You kan sleep inside."

He shivered again and I knew it'd only be a matter of time before he agreed with me. He can only be stubborn for so long.

"No," he protested, trying to stop his shivering. I shook my head, wondering how someone could be this stupid.

The door opened behind us, and I turned to see Germany standing there with a blanket tucked in his arms. "I'm zorry if I vas hinterrubding, put I zought vu'd pe cold."

"Hey, Ger-man!" America raised his hand to wave without getting up.

I sighed defeated and held out my hand for the blanket. Germany

gave it to me and I dropped it on America's face. He complained about it of course but focused on struggling with it.

"Vat are vu tvo doing out here?" Germany leaned his shoulder against the doorway. I looked up at the sky, down at America trying to cuddle up on my lap and then back to Germany.

"Definitely not doing what it looks like."

Germany laughed slightly, his eyes tired but no longer sullen. Whatever stories he heard about his sister helped him, I can see.

"Vell, it looks like America is trying to sleep und is refuzing to do hanyzing reazonaple."

"Zen it's exactly what it looks like."

Germany nodded, and instead of trying to help me like I thought he would, he said, "koodnight vu tvo," and went back inside, shutting the door.

"Zanks, Gerrrmany." I frowned and turned to face America again. He had stopped shivering and was curled up under the blanket, his head facing upwards. His body felt limp and his grip around the blankets was loose.

He fell asleep again. How could someone even fall asleep that fast?

I rested my hand on him and adjusted my weight so I could sit up straight. America groaned but quickly went back for snoring. Why was he so insistent on laying like this? There was no way this could have been comfortable.

My puzzled reflection looked up at me from his sunglasses. I thought about my broken memory. In my hand, I held his sunglasses. I've seen his eyes, something I haven't ever done before. And he was sleeping right there in front of me, no way to stop me from just taking them off and seeing what he was hiding.

I shook my knee and little to see if he would wake up, but he didn't. He snored louder for a second before settling back down into a quieter repetition. If I wanted to, now was the time.

Slowly and carefully, I grabbed the sides of his glasses and slowly started to pull them off. Before I could fully remove them, I paused. Something deep inside me told me not to do anything further. It ate at my curiosity, turning it from a burning hunger to a mild feeling.

"What am I doing?" I muttered to myself and lowered his glasses down back onto his face. If he wanted me to know, he'd show me. I can't ruin the trust I've built up with him just because I really wanted something. He would feel so betrayed, taken advantage of.

That must be how he felt when I made those marks on him, then. Violated. He tried to hide them, so he must be ashamed. He said he didn't stop me, and that was what had stumped me. When I thought more about it, how could he have? I was stronger than him, he probably didn't want to get hurt. But then why isn't he trying to push me away, why didn't he yell at me about it? I would've yelled, would've been furious. But he wasn't.

Why?

**((*casually checks Wattpad notifications***

**...**

***insert high-pitch screaming***

**Oh. My. God! Seriously?! Why?! Thank you all so much for liking my little piece of gay fanfic, I actually didn't imagine I'd get this many reads. Thank you all so much! Ahhhhhh, I love you all!))**

**I dunno how many reads I had then but I bet it was more than 1.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# America Has Another Episode

**America's POV**

Canada is baaaaad at hiding things. At least he is for me. Ever since that dinner party thing at Russia's last week, he has been kind of anxious and won't say much about his new girlfriend. I keep trying to bug him about it, but he refuses to say anything to me.

"Come on man, I know you're hiding something. Just tell me." I pleaded for what felt like the thousandth time, hoping that Id break him soon. It was getting so obnoxious, I was annoying myself! And I didnt think that was even possible!

"No, Ame I promised, please leave it alone."

"Promised what? To not say anything to me when I tell you EVERYTHING."

Canada gave a low sigh, clearly annoyed. "No, I keep my promises. Now please stop asking."

I groaned turning away from him. We were walking home from school, just another mundane day. Halloween was soon, so my mood was a little better. I already had my costume picked out and everything, I was going to be Pennywise from IT. It was going to be the best thing anyone has ever seen, but I may be biased.

Nah, Im awesome.

Canada started talking, but I was slightly tuning him out, out of spite. I looked at the sidewalk ahead of us, not particularly trying to see anything. The red leaves crunched under my feet and I resisted the urge to jump on every one I saw. I had a glass jar in my bag, I dont want to break that.

I wonder what Russia was doing for Halloween.

I blinked at the random thought, startled by its randomness but thought out it some more. What was he going to be? I mean, hes already scary as it is. He doesnt really need to wear a costume, but itll be funny to see him in something.

"Hey did you see that?"

I looked at Canada confused. "What? See what? Where?"

He pointed to the tree line that ran parallel to the sidewalk a few yards away. We stopped walking and stood there, scanning the brush and the space between the trees waiting for something to move, or for any sounds. After a few moments of not seeing anything, I lost interest.

"I dont see anything."

"Shhh." He held a finger over his lips.

I scoffed and shoved my hands in my pockets. How dare he shush me, no one tells me to be quiet. Except for Canada, hes a different story. So to humor him, I pretend to try and find what he saw, thinking that it could have been a squirrel or something.

A twig snapped and my eyes darted to the source of the sound. For a split second, I saw someone dart between the trees, heading away from us. I immediately walked closer, hoping to get a better view and see what the hell that was, but Canada grabbed my wrist and quickly pulled me back.

"Yo, what are you doing?" I exclaimed.

"Don't get closer, it could be a wild animal." He warned, keeping his tight hold on me. If he hadn't I would have possibly run into the woods to see who that was. I mean, what creep is just out hiding in the woods in the fall?

Oh, maybe this is a Halloween prank. And early one, albeit.

"Oh Canada," I patted my brothers hand. "Dont worry a little fur on top of that hat of yours, its probably just someone trying to prank us."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, duh! Its the Halloween season." I started to walk back down the sidewalk to go home. I was cold and just wanted to curl up under my blankets and binge watch some YouTube or Netflix. Canada had no choice but to follow after me, quickly catching up to walk alongside me again.

"Someone was probably trying to scare random countries and you saw whoever it was and they just got spooked and ran off."

"I dont know, I just got a weird feeling." He rubbed his arm and looked behind him back at the tree line. He was nervous and it seemed like he was the one who got spooked, but for him, that wasnt hard to do. I still felt kind of sorry for him.

"Hey, speaking of Halloween, you going to do something with Ukraine?" I elbowed his side to try and get his attention away from the woods.

"Hmm? Why?"

"Uhhh, cause you guys are dating, duh."

"Oh right!" He smiled, like the fact that he was no longer single was news to him. Wasn't too shocking, some people in the beginning usually forget until it hits them. "Maybe, I dont know. I can always ask her, though."

"Well, if you need ideas, I was thinking of having a Halloween party at the house. You down to help with that, bro?"

"Dad won't let you, not after the last time." He shook his head and I frowned. He was right, Dad would definitely say no. The last time I had a lot of people over was during the summer and it got wild! It was fucking awesome, but the best parties have the ugliest ends. Mine ended with me grounded for a week, which I thought was unfair. Why should I be punished for Australias pets getting loose? I wasnt responsible for Greenlands actions.

"Fine. I won't tell him this time."

"No, we won't have one."

"Fiiiiiine." I slumped forward, my feet dragging behind me. Canada just gotta ruin my fun here. "Well then what am I going to do?"

"You can walk around, enjoy the holiday. Maybe see if some houses would give you candy?" Canada suggested, patting my back to help make me feel better. I sighed, it not really working but the effort was nice. Not all countries celebrated Halloween, but UN agreed it would be a nice community thing to do, especially for the still young ones. Healthy and allowed us to come together to have some celebrations. I of course, greatly supported that idea. So even if some countries don't have it as a Holliday, they still put some effort into the day for the sake of others.

"I got it!" I jumped back up with new excitement. Canada jumped away from me, quickly tearing his hand away from me and holding it like he just touched boiling water. "Ill go and investigate some haunted place, like that old house a few streets away. Or-or that creepy camp we found in the woods that one time!"

"What, no! I meant do something safe, please!"

"What, I should totally do that? Why thank you brother for fully supporting me." I smiled and started to plan the whole night in my head. It would be fun to try and do something scary, and who knows maybe well catch a ghost or something. But I just have to figure out who is going to be a part of the we.

"No I am not, please dont do anything stupid."

"You know I can always count on you."

"I'm in no way helping you with this."

"I should invite Russia."

"You are just going to keep ignoring what Im saying, arent you?"

"Now your catching on." I patted his arm and started thinking about who would want to come and hunt ghosts with me. Canada would defiantly not, he hates the dark and anything that involves half the

things I like. New Zealand and Australia were already going to do something on Halloween. I can have Russia come with me, he probably has nothing to do that day anyway. Germany and Poland were going to do something with a friend of Poles so they are out, too. South may be down to hunt ghosts with me and Russia. Maybe Phil would want to come, too. Its been a little bit since we have hung out together. I mean, we havent for obvious reasons, but now we are cool.

"Wá:nösgo'. (He stole it.)"

"Huh?" I stopped to turn around, expecting to find someone behind us wearing a scary costume. But there was no one there, no one close enough to have whispered that in my ear anyway.

"What?" Canada asked, looking at me and to where I was looking.

"Nothing I thought I heard something." I shivered when a chill ran down my spine, the feeling like a hand slowly trailing down my back. Ugh, creepy. No thank you.

"You dont think it had something to do with that figure, do you?" He whimpered, his eyes going wide looking back to the woods. I shook my head, knowing very well I mustve heard someone close by. Maybe they yelled and it was faint or something.

I opened my mouth but coughed before I could respond. "Ögwanönya:nis. (We scared it off.)" I immediately slapped one hand over my mouth and looked down into my other hand. That black liquid was splattered over my palm, slowly dripping off. I turned to Canada with wide eyes, realizing that this was happening here. In public. Again.

I was thrown into a coughing fit, doubling over from the pain and trying to hold it all in.

"Crap, hang on America." Canada picked me up and swung me over his shoulder, doing nothing good for my stomach. I covered my hand with my mouth again as I coughed out more of that sour-tasting liquid. It burned my throat, a fire slowly blazing from my stomach and chest, moving up into my mouth. I bit my lip to try

and hold back from crying out in pain, not when I was out here with people on the other side of the sidewalk.

That didnt stop the tears from streaming down my cheeks and landing on Canadas jacket. I was doing my best at keeping the fiery liquid in my mouth instead of throwing it all up on his back, but the way he was moving and how his shoulder kept stabbing into my stomach kept fight against my efforts. The way he moved, it was like he was swaying, or trying to run on the waves of a stormy sea. The sky slowly started to darken, the shadows everywhere grew and I tried to focus on something before my vision gave out.

Hang on, we are almost home. Canadas watery voice slurred, which might have been a million miles away from how distant he sounded to me. The sound of his feet stomping on the pavement was nothing but light tapping, fading away the more I tried to latch onto it to try and stay present.

"Ëhseyë'he't. (You will learn.)"

I looked over at the wood line, my line of sight shaky from Canada running. The colors had been washed out, replaced with shades of grey and their growing shadows. But then I saw them. Faint figures standing too far away for me to clearly tell who they were. I only noticed them because a white line glowed around them all, clearly outlining and reveling numerous countries just standing there.

My vision went dark for a few seconds and I panicked, flailing around to feel where I was. Canadas jacket had a distinct feel to it, so when I grabbed it and twisted the fabric around my hands I knew I was still being carried by him.  This blackout never happened before, and I have no idea why its happening.

"He'gë:'? (Brother? [younger]), " my voice shook as tears streamed down my cheeks faster. "De'akdo:gëh (I can't see)."

"Hang on, America." Canadas voice got louder and I had no choice but to put all my faith in him. I knew he could get me home before this got bad, so I used this to try and get myself to calm down. I cant see, but it's okay, I dont need to see. I close my eyes all the time, this is just like this. I mean, I could have always opened up

my eyes and then see again and I can't do that now and I have no idea why its happening or if it would let up after my episode. No, America, calm down, calm down. Everything always ends, the only thing I'm left with is my eyes. I'll be okay.

"Mom!" Canada yelled, making me jump and hitch my labored breathing. That caused a violent coughing fit, bring back up the fire that I had been able to hold back. A flurry of voices mixed in together and I felt hands grab ahold of me, trying to pry me away from Canada.

"Hë'eh! Sëni:hë:h! Sa'saet! (No! Stop it! Go away!)" I screamed at them, kicking and flailing to try to get them away from me. Whoever they were, they were close to me because I was able to make contact with my foot and hit something. Refusing to be taken away, I kept my strong grip on Canadas jacket and begged, "He'gë:', de'ho'ska:h! (Brother, dont let them take me!)"

"America, stop please, you're going to hurt them!"

"Amairica, sweetie, calm down! Eet eez yur family!"

"He'ëh! Ëtseyatga'! (No! Let go of me!)" I kept kicking at the voices. How did I know that they really where my family, I couldnt see them. They could have been those figures in the woods trying to trick me. Canada may have fought against them for all I knew or was too scared to try.

"Ëtsyanitgë't, o'sashëda:go'! (Leave us alone, stay back!)"

My hands were ripped away from Canada, a loud tear and he was gone. I threw the fabric onto the ground and flew out my arms, trying to find him again. Something grabbed my wrists and pinned them down to the ground, a strong and painful hold.

"Ëtseyatga'! Ögyë:ëh! (Let go of me! It hurts!)" I tried to sit up and free my arms from this persons grip, but they were stronger than me. Two other sets of hands grabbed my ankles and pinned my legs down so I couldnt kick whoever they were away. Stuck on my back, I struggled against the holds and screamed loudly, hoping that someone would hear me and help me.

"Ga:weh neh He'gë:'! (Brother, where did you go!)"

"Imaerica, cahlm daown, playse! We daont wahnt t huht yah! (America, calm down, please! We dont want to hurt you!)" Australias voice came from somewhere to my right.

"Dasgyenöwö's, a:kdoä'! (Help me, he's holding me down!)" I tried to yell to him to get him to help me. He sounded close, close enough to attack the person holding me down on my right. I waited, expected him to help but the persons grip didnt let up.

My violent coughing came back, the rising liquid shooting up into my mouth. I tried to force that out of my mouth, feeling it splatter out onto my face and dripping out the sides of my mouth. It started to build up, filling up my throat, and closing off my airways.

"He's choking, turn him on his side." My dads voice spoke above me just as I was flipped onto my side. I broke free from their holds and I got onto my hands and knees, throwing up the black substance. My throat burned like sandpaper was being scrapped across the inside of it, tears stinging my eyes again. My stomach churned, my arms growing weaker as my body grew heavier.

When everything I had was out, I slowly sat up and opened my eyes. I hadn't noticed I had shut them when all I saw was black. A dull light filled my vision and faded to show my dad in front of me, the black liquid soaked into his pants, and some splotches on his shirt. He held me up by my shoulders and his mouth was moving, but I heard nothing. The world around me spun, a ringing in my ears the only sound.

"America!" Canadas faint voice came closer.

I was lifted up by someone behind me just as Canada engulfed me into a tight hug. My feet were off the ground and it became clear how weightless I felt. My energy was spent and I just wanted to sleep.

"Whats wrong with me?" I asked, trying to look at him but my head refused to move as I wished. My movements were sluggish, a heavy weight tying me down. The more I tried to keep my head up and

my eyes open, the more the weight dragged me down.

When he set me back on my feet, my knees buckled under my weight. I recognized I was falling as the ground rushed to meet me. As soon as my body made contact with the floor, everything went back to black.

**((Hey-o, back with a pretty short chapter only like 2000 words. Mostly filler again, more for setting up the idea for the next chapter. Might make that a two parter, but itll be Halloween-y. Be prepared for the spooks, kiddos.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Halloween

**(Have some late Halloween crack kiddos.)**

**Narrator's POV**

It was a calm start to the holiday, school was over, countries dressed in costume, younger countries laughed as they played tricks on each other. Everything was at peace, each leaf that fell from the tree acted as a countdown to the oncoming winter, a beautiful ticking that never had an unsettling ambiance to it. Decorations played the scary music, flashed their colorful lights, and held up the spirit of the month. Nothing could go wrong.

That is until America opened his goddamn mouth.

"Come on bitches, its spoopy time!" His voice screeched as he burst out of his house, almost kicking down the door.

"Please calm down, son." Britain walked out of the house behind him, his arm wrapped around France's waist. They both were dressed rather fancy, a norm for Britain, and were heading out to a party. It would have been perfect for a small sneaky party to happen since they wouldn't be back till early in the morning, but America had other plans. Plus he had to sit for an entire lecture by his father about coming home to find not a thing out of place. He wasn't the only one, his other siblings had to sit through it with him, but he could tell it was directed mostly at him.

"Please be careful, and mak sure you stik wiv yur friends." France broke free from Britain just so she can pinch America's cheeks like she had done since he was young.

"Moooom, that hurts. And you're going to ruin my face paint." He complained while wearing a smile. He had the makeup that resembled Pennywises' from the famous horror movie and wore a wig that resembled his hair. His costume fit it almost to a tee, the only thinking sticking out about it like a sore thumb was his

persistent sunglasses.

"Have fun and don't cause trouble." Britain ruffled his son's wig to mess it up a little bit. America made a pouty face and quickly tried to straighten it out.

While his parents went one way, America ran down the road to South Korea's house. It was a shared house between him and his brother North, but neither of them has fully grasped the concept of "sharing". A lot of the house is divided up in half, even the decorations and wallpaper marked the split in different rooms. Other doors were fully chained up, the key to every single one North claimed was on his person at all times. South didn't need to keep his on him, he was a very effective hider.

Even from the outside, you can see the split. Half the house was painted in a dark navy blue and bits of red, while the other was white with blue and red accents. It must be frustrating living with someone who is overprotective of what's theirs' and won't let you go into half the rooms in the house, America thought to himself as he hurried up the steps.

"Yo, South!" He yelled as he knocked on the white side of the door. "You ready to go hunt some ghosts!"

A few minutes later, South opened the door. He looked like his normal self, albeit dressed in less vibrant clothes and had a surgical mask over his mouth. Since he wouldn't normally wear that until later in the year, America's eyes lingered on it. Maybe it was a part of a costume, a lazy one and unclear, but a costume. South Korea hadn't been too big on Halloween after all but recently had been getting excited about it more.

And he was excited about it today and had been preparing for when America came over.

"Am I pretty?" South Korea asked, changing his voice to sound feminine, and tilting his head in a creepy way.

America furrowed his brows but went along with it. "Yeah, man, you're gorgeous."

SK smiled, his eyes squinting upwards. Slowly, with a single finger, he lowered his surgical mask, letting it drop down below his neck and resting on his collarbone.

America jumped back, letting out an audible gasp and his heart jumping up into his throat. The corners of South Korea's mouth were split open, making an ear to ear grin, his flesh torn and excruciating blood, dripping down his cheeks and catching on the mask that was set below his neck. His teeth poked through the bloody mess, fully exposed and horrifically stained and mangled.

When he laughed, it sent chills down America's spine.

"Am I pretty now?"

Out of nowhere, SK pulled out a knife and swung it into America's stomach. He screamed in fear, seeing the hilt of the blade pushed up against his own costume. His stomach churned and his heart stopped when he processed what he was seeing. SK's tight hold on the hilt of the knife, his hand almost shaking from the force, and unknown to him, from his effort not to laugh.

America glanced up at his friend and only saw his menacing smile taunting him. As terrified as he was, he didn't feel any pain. No red hot fire poker stirring around his insides, nothing at all. He whimpered to himself, too afraid to move.

SK's slowly pulled his knife away and he prepared himself for the wave of pain that would overtake his nerves and force him on his knees. But when SK's knife relieved no blood, America quickly patted down the spot where he had been stabbed. Only, he hadn't been. There was no puncture wound, no blood anywhere.

"Hahahahahahaha!" SK broke out into a laugh, tears forming in the corners of his eyes. He had got America good! Oh, he would never let this go away now! He took his knife and stabbed the palm of his free hand, demonstrating that the knife was fake. The blade retracted into the hilt, making it look like it had the appearance of going through his hand.

"That was priceless, you should have seen your face!"

America frowned, trying to steady his heartbeat. Oh, how he wanted to yell at him, tell him off for doing that, and just leave him there in a rage. He probably would have done that too, if he still wasn't suffering from shock. That allowed him some time to think rationally. And for him to feel strangely proud that South had gone from not trying on Halloween to expert.

"Fuck, man," America's voice broke, "tha-that's really good." He quickly cleared his throat to deepen his voice, after that embarrassing mess and the dignified cry he gave he'd rather not have more to be teased about. SK smiled widely, and in doing that the makeup and the other materials he used to make his fake wounds sifted in an unnatural way. That reassured him it was just part of his costume.

"Is it? It took me forever to make it look realistic." South carefully pulled back up his mask, slowly to not ruin his hard work. Then he leaned behind the door to pick up a duffle bag, quickly shoving his fake knife in the bag then zippering it closed. The bag was full of the stuff America had said could be useful. Of course, a majority of the things in the bag he said it as a joke, but it's hard to convey sarcasm over text.

"Scared me half to death."

"You're easy to scare."

"You know I'm not. What was with the whole 'am I pretty' thing?" America mocked his female voice with one of his own.

As South explained to him the legend behind his costume, the pair walked in the direction of the Southern Asia district. Philippines lived there, along with his two best friends Indonesia and Malaysia, and his older brother Marshall. Phil agreed to go, but as long as he got to bring Vietnam with them. America didn't mind, he figured the more the merrier. And Vietnam was more superstitious than him, it'd be fun to try and scare him. Like the good ole' days.

They met Phil and Vietnam walking towards them on the sidewalk. Phil was in costume, a long vampire cape flowing as he moved, fake blood dripping from the corners of his mouth and fake fangs on his

teeth. Vietnam, on the other hand, had on a shirt with a pumpkin on it, the only thing that seemed seasonal on him.

“Hey ‘Meri!” Phil smiled, waving his hand high in the air for the other two to see. “Hiya South!”

“What’s up my favorite sunshine kid!” South ran past America, almost knocking him to the ground. The two met each other in the middle and gave each a high-five. The two were close friends, getting along great. Phil of course usually got along with everybody, but a select few were his closest and best friends. South Korea was one of those few.

“Love your costume, Meri.” Phil pointed to his Pennywise suit. It wasn’t completely done without a red balloon, according to America, but close enough. “And what are you supposed to be South?”

South smiled and America quickly jumped away, heading to hide behind Vietnam. That confused the other two, but America is a weird country, so it wasn’t unexpected. South, on the other hand, knew exactly why he had leaped to safety. He found it hilarious.

“Am I pretty?” South did his creepy high pitched voice. Phil tilted his head, not getting what he had meant. He shared a confused look with Vietnam before slowly saying, “Uhh, yeah I guess? I don’t get it.”

South lifted his mask and showed off his scarred face.

“Am I still pretty?”

“South, that’s amazing!” Phil exclaimed, immediately falling in love with the creepy design and the detail in it. “You have to do my costume next!”

“Seriously, you don’t do the stabbing thing to him?” America popped his head out from behind Vietnam, who was unaffected by the scare attempted by South. “That’s what got me.”

“What stabbing thing?” Vietnam looked at South with narrowed eyes, glancing down at his hands and his pockets to see if there was

any sign of any knife. He'd attack South before he gave him the chance to stab Philippines.

"I'll tell you later. We gotta go get Russia." South picked up his bag and motioned for them to follow him as he took the lead. Phil smiled, clapping his hands a little then grabbed Vietnam's arm and urged him to go faster. He loved Halloween, for him, it went on for almost a week. In that time he loved spending it with his family and friends and honoring his deceased ancestors. Although a ghost hunt went up against that last one a little bit, he was still excited about it. And Vietnam was just happy that he got to hang out with Phil.

America trailed behind the group, mostly nervous about what had happened during his last episode. It had gotten worse, and it freaked him out more than when he thought he got stabbed. In fact, he'd prefer to actually get stabbed then go through that again. He lost his sight, and that terrified him. Maybe it's just a new thing he has to deal with, one he didn't want to of course.

And what were those figures? He's never hallucinated before, either. Everything got worse because of them, he concluded as he looked up ahead.

They were almost at Russia's, just a few houses away. He had gotten a text from him a few hours later when he woke back up from blacking out. He had asked if he was okay. It made him smile, he really needed to hear someone else's worry for him. Someone who wasn't held to, like he felt his family was.

"Hey, Ame!"

South Korea looked over his shoulder to see if America had heard him. The country perked his head up and jogged over to catch up with him. When he did, South asked, "Where exactly are we going? I know you said an abandoned settlement in the forest, but where?"

America explained to him when he and Canada had gone exploring in the woods and found the clearing. There were forts and what looked like a settlement made by a group of somethings awhile ago. It was empty, no soul in sight. There was something in it, some energy that told America that he didn't belong there. He wasn't

welcomed and he needed to get out as soon as he could. Canada felt something similar, but it wasn't as strong or as intense. Whatever was there seemed to like him more than it did America.

Russia was waiting on his front steps drinking from a small flask, waiting for his friends to arrive. Ukraine was on the sidewalk in front of their house talking with Canada, twirling around her black ribbon that came down on the feather crown that replaced her usual flower one.  She was dressed as a black raven, just a simple black dress, black boots, tights, gloves, and a sweater. On her back, she had small black wings that almost blended in with her outfit. Canada was dressed more simply, a hockey jersey and a hockey stick in hand. For when he didn't want to carry it, he had a small fastened pouch on his back to hold it.

The pair confused Russia. Normal couples tried to be all sappy and dress in similar outfits for times like these. That's what he figured, from what America has been blabbing on about the entire week up until today. Russia never really had too much of an interest, but to at least please America he decided to make a small effort. He had a wolf tail, fake attachable ears on his hat, and fake teeth. But beyond those accessories, he was in his normal sweater and jeans.

Canada looked over and saw that Russia was glaring at him again. How he wished he could explain to him what was going on so he didn't have to suffer through that menacing look. But he had made a promise to Ukraine that he wouldn't tell anyone. And he was more than willing to help a friend, and he'd never break a promise. Never intentionally, of course.

"I know you hate ze dark," Ukraine caught his attention back, "but I just don't want them finding what they aren't supposed to."

Canada nodded, fully understanding her worries. She just didn't want anything to ruin her happiness. Which is why she was very careful to keep it away from Russia. He doesn't know when to butt out and leave her own business to herself.

After a few more minutes of waiting, Russia spotted the other countries walking up towards his house. Immediately he spotted America, having dressed up completely and being his extra self. He

recognized South Korea behind him, along with Philippines and Vietnam. Phil was the only other one who was just as dressed up as America.

Russia walked down the steps onto the sidewalk, stopping by Ukraine in time for them to walk up to them.

“Hey Russia, scary mask you have on.” America chortled his normal shit-eating smile tauntingly on his lips.

“I’m not vearrring mask.” Russia raised a brow, and once he understood the insult he frowned and punched his shoulder. “At least I don’t look like some veirdo in bedsheet.”

“Hey, it’s not a bedsheet. And what about you, huh? I thought you didn’t like having those fake cat ears and tail, what's different?”

“I have frrree vill.”

“Guys!”

Russia and America looked over to see the others standing there, looking at them expectantly. “As soon as you two are done, we’d like to get there before the night ends.” Vietnam chastised them, just wanting to get this whole ghost hunt over with and he could go back home. Maybe just watch a movie with Phil and his mom.

“Fine, fine.” America gave up on his attempts to aggravate Russia and started to walk down the street. Canada, trying not to show his nervousness, hurried after his brother, and walked behind him. America was slightly surprised he was even there but ruled it off as wanting to seem macho in front of his new girlfriend. But hiding behind him didn’t seem to do Canada any favors.

After a few minutes of walking and talking, America had lead everyone to the edge of the massive length of the forest. The moon was tucked behind clouds, allowing the shadows to deepen and grow outwards. Like a stereotypical Halloween night, faint shrills of younger countries were in the distance, the automatic music barley audible. The sounds of the forest were in front of them, but even that was quiet.

“Uhh, I don’t like this.” Canada shook his head no and backed away from the looming danger. “Can’t we just go around and do something else?”

“No way!” Philippines jumped ahead of them, diving right into the bushes. He quickly disappeared, the only sign of him a golden glow from his right eye. “Come on, I wanna go get scared!”

“I like gumption of him.” Russia chuckled, looking around to find a clear path in.

“Phil, you gotta be careful, we didn’t know what was in there.” Vietnam quickly dove into the bushes to find his friend, throwing aside anything that didn’t feel like a person. In his haste to find him, he tripped over something and fell on the ground. Phil was what he tripped over, bringing both of them down.

Russia pulled out a flashlight, being sensible, and carefully walked around the plants. The others followed suit, stepping cautiously and looking down to make sure they didn’t trip. America was worried something would tear his costume and started to rethink why he wanted to wear it. Oh right, he looked awesome in it and he wanted to.

Vietnam had fallen on top of Phil and they both were struggling to get up, Phil’s cape wrapped around them and the hood of it blocking the sunshine countries vision. Russia shook his head at the idiocy of the two in front of him. He handed his flashlight off to Canada and worked on freeing the two.

South Korea grabbed out his video camera, turning it on and handing it to America. The camera was equipped with night-vision, like the other one in his bag. The third one was his since it was constructed better and had the third option of thermal imagery. He planned to give the second night-vision camera to Phil, but seeing how accident-prone he’s going to be with his cape, he turned it over to Ukraine. She seems to be able to safely handle things.

“Whoa, you all look spooky,” America said as he looked through the camera lens. Everyone had a turquoise tint to themselves, their eyes giving off a slight glow, along with anything light in color. He

began to record just in case something happened, and also to get a video of the two flailing around like a fish on deck.

“Don’t waist footage,” Ukraine warned, tucking her camera in her dress pocket. It was a costume she designed herself, so she made sure her skirt had deep pockets. That way her costume could still be useful in some way. She wished other clothes had that.

“Don’t worry, those cameras can hold hours of footage, we’ll be okay.” South Korea reassured her. Still, just to be safe, Ukraine decided to save hers. South and America had one each, two idiots with a camera were good enough.

“Which way are we going?” South closed his bag and looked around through his camera. Canada pointed ahead with the flashlight, nervously trying not to let the shadows play tricks on his mind. The quickly darting thing? That’s just a small animal or something like that. That ominous shadow? Just a tree. He hoped.

“This way,” America turned and started to march off. Russia helped Vietnam and Phil up, fallowing behind the slowly moving group. Russia stayed in the back, making sure he could keep his eye on everyone. And make sure that Canada didn’t wreak his flashlight. The poor boy needed it, though, so obviously scared of the dark. Why he even chose to come was unknown, but he knew it had something to do with his sister.

Ukraine looked over and seen that Canada was basically shaking, so she set her hand on his arm to make him feel better. When it didn’t really work, she wrapped his upper arm in a small side hug, hoping to calm down his nerves. He was thankful for the gesture, but she saw it as the least she can do with what he’s helping her with.

America stomped on a down branch and snapped it in half, stepping onto the familiar path he had walked down before. “Guys, this is the path. Now we just got to fallow this and we’ll come across it.” He looked behind him with the camera, watching each of the figures emerge from the woods cautiously and onto the path. Russia tripped on his way out, America running to help catch him. How he thought that would work was anyone’s guess, but in reality, they both fell onto the ground.

“My camera!” South cried, quickly scrambling over to them to find it. He was quick to ignore the two, not noticing that the camera was still safely held in America’s hand. In fairness, America didn’t notice it either. He was busy trying not to freak out over being pinned down on the ground by Russia, who was trying to get up. They both made eye contact, Russia's face dangerously close to America's, and froze.

“Gaaaaay.” Vietnam’s voice came from above them, muffled laughter from Phil encouraging him to laugh as well.

Russia growled and practically launched himself off of the ground, away from America. He looked so flustered and it was easy to tell in the light of the flashlight.

“Aww, Ruski get back down here, I wasn’t done～’” America teased, turning on his side and patting the dirt next to him. Russia shot down a glare, lifting his foot to kick his shin. America noticed that and quickly rolled out of the way.

“Guys stop it, where’s my camera!” South stopped Russia from carelessly slamming down his foot. He didn’t want it to be broken or smashed, that thing cost a lot of money.

“Don’t get too worried, there K. It's right here.” America stood and showed off the camera, making sure that nothing happened to it. Nothing did, and the video was still rolling.

“America, if you broke my camera I will-“

“Relax, man, it's fine. No cracks or anything.” America looked past the others and down the path he was going. The single flashlight did nothing to show the path, only a few feet around them Then the dark quickly swept in, surrounding them in a tight circle. At least with the cameras, they had a chance to see.

South felt like they needed a little bit more light, just in case their one flashlight died. He opened his bag and looked for some. He liked to be prepared, especially when he gets to show off some of his technology. China was always known for his, he just wanted the same recognition.

The forest was cold, with very few sounds. Any sudden noise that didn't come from their immediate area set everyone on edge. Only Canada and America knew where they were going, and how much longer they needed to walk. Ukraine was constantly scanning the tree line, hoping to spot the path and make sure everyone avoided it. It was the whole reason she even came, the whole reason she had convinced Canada to come. He had previously made plans to hang out with a friend of his, Mexico, but she knew that America would always listen to Canada. He would be the only one capable to keep them off her tail.

"How much longer will it be, we shouldn't be out here long." Vietnam eyed a dark path of something and shone the light South Korea gave him. Just a pile of logs. Strange, they looked like they were chopped recently, like how someone does when trying to prepare wood for a fire.

"It's just up ahead here, but we can make it there faster if we go through this short cut." America scanned the path up ahead through the camera. If he remembered correctly, it should be past that weird looking tree with the circle branch.

Ukraine noticed where they were going and quickly whispered to Canada that they had to avoid the shortcut. That was the way to their shared secret, and she didn't want to risk her being found out.

"Found it."

"Hey, What was that!" Canada pointed his flashlight to the opposite way America had turned to. Everyone looked at Canada and to see what he was talking about. Russia quickly jumped in front of everyone and with a swift flick of his wrist, a switchblade swung open and he got prepared to use it.

"Holy shit Russia, where the fuck did you get that?!" America jumped away from him, eyeing the blade in his hand.

"I always have it." He kept his eyes focused on the path ahead of them, watching for any movement to catch his eye or for a sound to give away the position of the thing. Unbeknownst to him, there was nothing. Canada had done the first thing that popped into his head.

“Russia, it was probably my eyes just playing tricks on me.” He tried to clam down the bigger Country, hoping that he would deem it safe to walk down. He hoped him screaming that it would ensuite a chase, leaving the shortcut alone. “At least, I hope it was. I don’t want it to be a ghost or something.”

“Ghost? Maybe it was!” Phil quickly moved to run down the path and chase after the creepy creature, but Russia quickly swung out his arm and stopped him in his tracks.

“Nyet, ve’ll take the shortrt kut. Just to make surrre it vasn’t animal.” Russia nudged his head to the path beside them and Ukraine yelled, “No!”

Everyone jumped at her sudden outburst. She didn’t deter from it and took out her camera. “We came here to find something, so we must not run from anything.”

“Ukrrraine, don’t!” Russia demanded, reaching out to grab her arm and pull her back. He missed and she marched down the path, camera in hand, and opened on the night vision so she could see. Vietnam admired her courage, blind to the fact that she knew nothing was there.

Leaving no choice everyone fallowed her, looking around on edge. America made sure his camera was still recording in case they caught something and anyone who had a flashlight quickly scanned between the trees. It wasn’t long before the path opened up and America forced his way to the font of the group again.

“This is it!” He turned around to face everyone, his only vision through the camera screen. “You guys ready to see something creepy?”

“Yes!”

“That’s why we're here.”

“Then, let's go!” He spun on his heels and walked into the clearing. Through the camera, he saw the first tall building. It was wooden, clearly constructed from logs. The building was long, extremely

long. The roof was made from what looked like bark nailed down. He supposed it kind of looked like a very naturized barn. Inside he knew there was a bunk bed type of construction bordering the entire inside walls, leaving a narrow path to walk down the very center of the building to the other open entrance at the other end of the side you entered.

“What is zis?” Russia ran his hand along the side, touching each rim of the wood and noting it was very old. The wood was rough, felt dirty, and left some residue on his fingertips.

“We have no idea.” Canada shrugged, walking away from Ukraine to approve him. When everyone was caught in the amazement of what was in front of them, Ukraine had deeply thanked Canada for his diversion. He was more than happy to help her and told her thanks wasn’t necessary.

“Yeah, this log house or whatever it is, we just found it a while ago. There's more, just as big,” America explained, leading the group to the entrance. The air around him silently hissed, trying to lead him away from its secrets. He didn’t belong there, he had no business messing with their things again? And he had the audacity to bring more with him?

From the shadows, a figured lurked close by. They stayed hidden, only getting close to hear what the new group said. They had weird disguises on, perhaps to confuse them all and hide their attacker’s faces. Even through it, they were able to recognize the real monster. They all knew who he was. The one who had hurt them all so much for countless generations.

That boy with the striped face. If he didn’t leave soon, he’d have more to worry about than those cursed eyes he hides.

He’ll learn.

They’ll get their revenge.

**((Boom! Chapter up! I feel proud of the amount of time it took me with my hurt wrist. And don't worry, now I'll try and rest my hand so I can get all healed up and back on track.**

**For anyone who was asking, you can send fanart whoever you want and I'm periodically making small side chapters for them.))**

**I just realized all the fanart is gone :(**

**~ Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**Galaxy**

# Halloween Part 2

**America's POV**

"Who wants to bet that I can do a backflip off of this?"

"South, nyet."

I looked up to see South balancing up on one of the support beams. He had given Russia his camera and me his duffle bag so he could climb up onto the beams. They were less like the sturdy beams I have seen in other older houses and cabins, these were more like thick branches tied together with what looked like bark. How the hell that was able to bend around the wood was out of my realm of knowledge.

"I can do it," South ignored us, looking down at the ground lit with flashlights. Russia looked to me then set the camera down, getting ready to catch him. I didn't want to miss another one of his stupid stunts, so I kept my camera focused on him. In the dim light, I could just about make out his face and his look of determination.

South was just about to jump when I heard someone come walking up behind us. It was Vietnam, and he stopped in his tracks when he saw South up on the beam.

"What the hell are you doing?!"

"Whoa, fuck!" South exclaimed when he heard the shouting. I spun around just in time to see him desperately grab at the air in front of him like it could help balance himself. Russia quickly opened his arms and positioned himself below the beams to catch South as he fell from the rafters. He caught him and I ran to them just as South was set on his feet.

"I leave you all alone for ten minutes and you already try and kill yourselves!" Vietnam scolded us as he started stomping towards us, his eyes narrowed in an angered stare. He sounded like he thought

he was the overall parent of the group and we were his rebellious kids. "Do you have any idea how dangerous that could have been?"

"NOW I do." South gashed for air, his hand tightly clutched on Russia's sleeve. One would think he would have learned from that time when he tried to backflip off a counter. But alas.

"I'm friends with you." Vietnam shook his head and pinched the bridge between his eyes like he was disappointed in that fact.

"Hey, where's Phil?" I asked, looking around him and towards the entrance. I had to look through the camera screen to see clearly, my sunglasses darkened my vision so any light I saw was dimmed to me.

"What do you mean? He said he was going to you guys for something." Vietnam immediately lost his disappointed manner and quickly looked around us for Phil. I gave him a confused look. Phil never came here. We actually hadn't seen Phil, Canada, nor Ukraine since me, Russia and South wandered into this. And we've been in here for a little bit, maybe like fifteen minutes.

Vietnam pushed past me and looked around, straining his eyes to see in the dark. Russia grabbed his flashlight, handed South his camera and I handed him back his bag. When all that was situated we all ran after Vietnam to try and find Phil. Vietnam looked freaked out. But honestly, Phil got so interested in everything here he probably saw something and went to check it out.

"Don't worry, V," I bumped his arm with my elbow to try and calm him down. "Phil's alright, he probably just wandered off and found something cool. It's safe here anyway."

As I said that, the unsettling feeling I've been able to ignore so far rose back up. That's when I started to get a little bit freaked out, but was able to keep that hidden. No one showed any signs of being unsettled, beyond the normal stuff, and I have no actual proof that this place is dangerous.

"Phil!" Vietnam cupped his hands over his mouth and shouted. His voice echoed for a few seconds, going far into the trees.

"Philippines!"

"What is with the shouting?"

A bright light shone in my face, dulled down from my shades. We looked over to see Canada and Ukraine walking up to us, a camera pointed at us in Ukraine's hand and the flashlight in Canada's.

"Have you two seen Phil?" Vietnam in a panic ran up to them. Ukraine and Canada shared a look before they both shook their heads no.

"No, I'm sorry." Canada said and added, "how 'bout we go and find him then, eh?"

Playing safe, we decided not to split up. If this was the beginning of some horror movie, I'd rather not be the idiot that gets killed in the first five minutes. And hopefully, Phil won't be that idiot, too.

"Philippines!" Vietnam yelled into the night again. I jumped at his shout, previously it was just us whispering and trying to look around. We had circled the entire cleared area, went through all the structures, and everything.

"Dude, where are you!" I called out, looking around with the camera screen. A sudden jolt of energy rushed through me and I tripped over my feet. The ground came and caught me, a pain sharply cutting my knee.

"Amerrrica, arrre you okay?" Russia's footsteps came from behind me and I felt his hands lift me up from my armpits. I groaned from the speed of which he pulled me off the ground, my head feeling light and weird.

"Fuck, what the hell was that?" I rubbed my head trying to focus. I barely even felt myself being lowered back onto the ground.

"You fucking trrripped dingus," Russia laughed at me, making use of one of the insults I had once called him. I narrowed my eyes at him, obviously knowing I tripped. But on what, I didn't feel anything on my feet or ankles, it was just that weird jolt thing then suddenly my face got personally introduced to the ground.

"America, you're bleeding!" Canada quickly knelt down in front of me to examine what he saw. I looked down and did see that my costume had torn and there was fresh blood leaking down.

"Ah shit, this stuff is white. Blood is gonna suck getting out." I complained, less concerned about the tearing, it can always be sewn back together. But cleaning blood out of anything is more work than I'm ever willing to put in.

"Why are you worried about your costume, Ame? You're hurt, now sit down." Overly concerned Canada order me, with some emphasis from his finger pointed at the ground. I stuck out my tongue but decided to do as told, since I kinda always listen to him. He's too sweet to say no to.

"Vietnam, where are you going?" Ukraine pointed her camera away from me and towards the said country. He looked as if he didn't care that I had gotten hurt, seeing how he was a few yards away from us still walking away. South knelt down next to Canada and took my camera away from me so I could use both my hands to support myself.

"I'm going to find Phil, I'm not waiting on you guys!" He called back to us before running off into the darkness, the small light from a dim flashlight bouncing with every stride.

I hissed, my eyes were forced shut from the pain that surged from my knee. Canada was trying to wipe off the dirt with his hand, smearing around the blood that was dripping down my leg. I got a really good look at it and it looked like someone took a jagged knife and swiped at me.

That's when the pain settled in.

"Hell did zat?" Russia asked just as I started groaning from the rush of heat that surged like a spiderweb.

"I don't see anything you could have cut yourself on." Ukraine tried to help, looking around the area I had tripped at. I looked too, blinking away tears that had started to form. It was just flat ground, a few small pebbles but nothing that could have done this. Or cause

me to trip.

"Does anyone have anything, like a bandage?" Canada looked up at everyone, hoping to find something useful. I gasped, struggling to hold the pain in. What the hell, I was just walking fine and everything than bang! Life said, "here are some injuries". Fucking great!!

A clean white bandage suddenly appeared by my head and I looked to see it resting in Russia's hand. His sleeve had been rolled up, revealing his scars, but he quickly shoved the sleeve down before anyone noticed. South was digging through his bag and Ukraine was providing him light. The only one who saw it was Canada and me.

Instead of pointing it out, Canada took the bandage slowly and said, "Thank you," while looking him in the eye.

"Velkome," Russia looked away.

I kept my eyes on his wrists, relieved to know that he hadn't made any new cuts. They all looked old, healed over. And the fact that the bandages where clean helped ease the worry that I always felt whenever I saw him fidget with his sleeves.

"Ow, fuck." I hissed and looked down at my leg. Canada was adjusting the pressure of the bandage and was trying to tie it.

"Sorry, I have to pull it tight to make sure it doesn't bleed more."

"Where did Vietnam run off to?" South looked around us with the camera. Ukraine told him what he did as Canada and Russia helped me to my feet. I winced and jumped a little bit to adjust to standing on my good leg.

"I got his number on my phone, I can call him," I said reaching for my phone that I had in my pocket. Russia stopped me and grabbed my phone from my pocket for me. He opened it, somehow knowing my password, and called up Vietnam.

It rang, all of us going quiet for a while.

It beeped and went to voicemail.

"Damn, he must have put it on silent." I reasoned, steering clear away from the ghosts or creepy vibe this was going to.

"Let me try Phil," South grabbed my phone from Russia and dialed the number.

We all went silent once more and listened in anticipation for the sudden halt of the ringing and for Phil's voice to answer.

It rang until the end and went to voicemail.

"Okay, this is getting to a place I don't want it," Canada whimpered, trying to appear smaller than he was. It didn't help that he was helping to hold me up, having one arm while Russia held my other.

"No, it's not, it's just all in your head." Ukraine tried to provide some solace and patted his arm. She didn't look nervous, but then again I haven't ever seen any kind of emotion on her anyways.

"See, someone with reason," I joked, trying to break out of the hold the two had on me to walk by myself. They didn't budge, and I had to be stuck slightly suspended in the air, lowered enough so I can hop on one foot. Being helped out felt good, and I had less pain, but I didn't want to be seen as weak or useless.

South tried once more but hung up when it was obvious he wasn't answering. Against my protests, he gave my phone to Canada for him to hold onto for me. I swear, he is babying me on purpose now.

Wherever Vietnam ran off to, it has to be close. This area, as big as it is, is pretty empty. Not a lot of complex hiding places, unless he went to the outer woods surrounding it. Maybe he saw Phil out there and found him and is walking to us right now, about to reach us at any second. Or we just somehow keep passing him. Nah, he'd hear us.

"'Nam!" I called out, trying not to yell in Russia's or Canada's ears. I tried to step down again and winced, groaning in pain. God, it really fucking hurt, what the hell.

"Maybe we should set you down somewhere," Canada stopped walking, forcing Russia to stop as well. I shook my head no, about to object as I have been, but then my leg told me not to object.

"I kan karrry him forrr you Kanada," Russia offered, avoiding my gaze.

"Aww, my very own knight in shining fur," I teased, flicking his fake wolf ears. He frowned and turned away.

"Never mind, you kan deal vith him."

"It's okay, I was going to anyways." Canada helped support me up as we worked on trying to get me off of Russian support with as little pain as possible. Meanwhile, I heard Ukraine and South yelling for Phil and Vietnam.

"Ow, fuck." I groaned, hopping on one foot and bending my hurt knee to keep it elevated. But bending it hurt and striating it out hurt. I was left to suffer.

"Im sorry," Canada apologized as he always did and we worked on getting me onto his back.

"We can leave America in there," South pointed to one of the house looking things. "The rest of us can try to find Sunshine and Vietnam."

"I don't wanna be left alone, I'm going to get bored," I complained as Canada lifted me onto his back. Ha ha ha, I'm almost as tall as Russia now. All at the price of a painful wound.

"And I don't want to leave you alone with everyone here disappearing."

"Dude, Canada, I'm going to be fine." I tried to shake that fear from Canada, but as usual, it didn't work. He still held onto my legs tightly, kinda hurting my already hurting leg. I held that to myself though, because Canada would just beat himself up over hurting me, even if it was an accident and/or he had hurt me as painfully as a slight tap.

"I kan stay vith him." Russia shrugged. I smiled, happy to have him as my company. "He'll be safe vith me, and Ukrrraine kan keep rrrest of you safe."

"Got it, cause no one messes with the communist siblings," I smirked.

"Im not a communist." Ukraine snapped at me, turning her head so fast her feather crown slid slightly to the side when she stopped.

However, Russia didn't object. No need to feel paranoid, it's not like it's the Cold War anymore. Communism is more of a meme than anything today anyway.

"Does that sound good, Canada?" South changed the subject, adjusting the strap of his bag on his shoulder.

My younger acting as older brother nodded. Cool, now I can be set down. Little does he know how much his protective hold on me his hurting me. Both in a physical and pride sense.

Ukraine followed close behind Canada and I as we walked into the nearest house structure. She kept fidgeting with something in her pocket, and I could hear whatever it was just barely audible over everyone's footsteps. I couldn't see or tell whatever it was, only that it slightly sounded metallic. When she noticed I was looking, she stopped and stiffly put her hands by her sides.

Weird.

"Okay, ready?" Canada turned his back to one of the wooden like platforms and slowly set me down on it. I winced and grabbed my leg, lifting it onto the weird shelf-like thing that poked out of the side. Honestly looked like it could be a giant bed. A very uncomfortable one, but a bed still.

"We'll be right back, do you promise to make sure nothing happens to him?" Canada turned to Russia, who was standing silently in the back. He nodded with a low grunt, crossed arms and standing as still and stiff as a log. Please don't tell me he's going to go to his dark Russia mode or this is going to be no fun.

Ukraine stood by the door entrance, watching South out of the corner of her eye. I saw him ruffling through his bag and I remembered the camera. I liked that thing, and if Russia is gonna be like a guard outside the freaking British castle, then I need some entertainment.

"Yo South, can I have my camera back?"

"Its mine, and no."

"Why not?"

"You fell with it two times now, I'm not going to give it back to you and give you another chance to break it. I'm lucky you haven't already."

I sighed, popping my lips.

"What if I see something scary and I don't have a camera to capture it?" It didn't seem to change his mind. Great, trying a different tactic this time then. "And if I break it, I swear I'll pay you back."

"Double for convincing me to give it back." He crossed his arms and tapped his foot.

"Fine whatever, gimme gimme."

He rolled his eyes at my immaturity, Russia stiffening a laugh. At the disbelief that I'd pay him back or my choice of words, I wasn't too certain about. Either way, I got a laugh.

"Okay, scream if something happens."

"Bro, nothing is going to happen. You're just getting inside your own head."

"Just be safe. Please."

South handed me a camera, and I looked it over. Just a few scratches on the case and dirt-smudged on the felt straps. "Okay, Canada."

Not in the least bit satisfied with my lack of concern, Ukraine had to drag him out. Well, less being dragged and more of tugging on his jersey sleeve to get him to follow. South gave me a look, giving me the universal hand symbol of "I'm watching you" by having his two fingers point at his eyes, and then to me.

I turned on the camera and messed around with the settings for a while. Then I perked my head up suddenly and out loud I said, "I should have asked to have my phone back."

Russia made a grunt again and started slowly walking around the single path in the structure, looking everything up and down. His flashlight lit up all of nothing, casting shadows that entertained me for a good five seconds. I pressed the record button and held the screen up to my face.

"Ruski~," I purred, focusing the camera on his face. He stopped walking and looked down at me before looking away and going back to what was in his flashlight.

"What do you vant?"

"Come here, I'm bored."

"Nyet."

"Why not?"

"Kause I'm slightly buzzed."

"All the better.~"

He gave me a death glare and just as quickly turned away. Although I was the one who said it, I felt my face get slightly red from remembering the last time he was drunk around me. Of course, I partially blamed Japan and that helped me feel less guilty about it and become more focused on how fucking hot that was. To be honest, I'm not sure how straight he is anymore.

"Not after what you told me I don't vant to."

I perked my head up when I heard that. It was less about what he

said but more of how he said. Oh no. He felt guilty. No, no, no, no, no, I didn't want that. It wasn't his fault, he was drunk and I urged him on! I didn't want him to feel bad.

"Hey, what's wrong? I heard that, that-that guilt in your voice."

Russia stopped pacing, the circle of light focused and smaller on the ground right below his hand.

"It's nothing, you'rrre just hearrring things."

"Okay, my turn to call out your bullshit lie." I turned to him, slowly lifting my leg and setting my foot down flat on the ground. I winced and bit back a groan, trying not to draw attention to that so he could change the subject. "I know that enough, and when you sound guilty, to know when you're lying. What's wrong?"

I know I had an idea, but I needed verbal confirmation.

"Not everrry time ve arrre left alone together has to be sentimental orrr emotional!" He snapped at me.

I jumped back at that sudden angered outburst but quickly looked away down at my feet. His sharp tone cut right through my chest, hurting me more than my real cut on my leg.

I heard a low sigh and he shuffle his feet, but I turned away and lifted my leg back onto the ledge. He wanted to be rude like that when I was only trying to help, then fine. I'll wait for him to cool off, I'll keep my mouth shut so I don't say anything bad, and then we'll come back. That's if he even wanted to.

"Amerrrica, I'm sorry I shouldn't-"

"It's fine." I interrupted.

I was met with silence, and I heard him continue pacing.

What the hell, me? He just apologizes and you immediately say the equivalent of "fuck you"? I mean, yeah, I'm in pain I can't be too hard on myself. But still? I was rude.

Just as I turned my head to apologize to him, a loud-soft thud ripped me from any of the words I might have said. Startled, I looked just in time to see the body of Russia go limp and fall to the ground with a heavy thump.

"Russia!" I exclaimed, turning my entire body so I can see him better. Standing above him was a large dark figure, cloaked in layers of heavy clothing. At a disadvantage with my injury and without a phone to call for help, I panicked and grabbed the camera South had left me and started recording. If I could leave some evidence of this figure, it may help the others find out who it was and find us before we get murdered.

It beeped on just as the dark mass of the figure tackled me, trying to restrain my hands. I shouted, words of profanity and objection, as I kicked as hard as I could. Adrenaline overtook the pain in my leg and the only thought I had was to get this guy off of me at any costs necessary. They grabbed my wrists and nocked the camera from my hand. I screamed out a cry for help, hoping to draw some attention to me. Canada couldn't have been far away, could he?

As quickly as that thought came to mind, a sharp pain hit the side of my head. I seized all attempts of fighting back as the room started to spin, and keeping my head up was almost as hard as carrying a ton of weights up a flight of stairs. All feeling drained into a murky memory as everything turned to black.

**Narrators POV**

It was dark and silent, no one daring to call out Vietnam or Philippines's name. It didn't seem right, to cut through the silence that seemed to be stronger than them. It was almost forbidden to even think of doing such a thing.

"Where would they even go?" Ukraine dared to ignore the demanding silence.

"I don't know." South followed her lead, speaking in a hushed tone. His eyes were trained on the camera as he scanned the area for heat signatures. He recognized the warm colors of objects that had been cooling from the sun's exposure and the heat that came from each

of the countries.

South stopped in his tracks when he saw the thing dart across his camera. Right in front of them, a large shape with a heat signature ran between two trees. Strange, it had made no sound.

"Wait, guys," the two froze and turned to look at South. He walked ahead of them, scanning the area with his camera trying to find what he had seen again. Stepping slowly and lightly, he rotated the camera around then in a 360, trying to see where whatever that thing had gone.

Something caught on his foot and he fell backward. The camera fell from his hand, landing on the ground with a piercing crack. At that sound, South had sat back up and quickly looked to the broken camera. Glass laid on the ground, reflecting light from Ukraine's flashlight as she and Canada ran over to him.

"South, oh my God, are you okay?" Canada hurried to help his friend but skidded to a stop just in front of him. His eyes went wide, almost bulging out of its sockets when he saw what South had tripped over.

Ukraine sharply gasped and hid her face in Canada's chest, his arms wrapping around her in comfort. She held her hand over her mouth to keep any sounds of fright inside her, and she shut her eyes tightly to keep the tears from falling.

South saw their reaction and a horrible chill went down his spine, his fingertips digging into the soil. Slowly, almost resistant, he lowered his head to see what he had tripped over.

At the sight, his throat tightened and his stomach churned, threatening vomit. There on the ground, his foot propped up on was the motionless body of Philippines. When he tripped, his foot got caught on his cape and caused the body to roll onto its side, so the lifeless eyes of one of his best friends were staring right at him. Blood poured down from a gash in his head, the dark liquid contrasting the light red that colored a part of his face. Dried lines came from his mouth, a foul stench quickly rushing to South's nose and causing him to gag.

Tears filled his eyes that were stuck on the horrid sight before him. He had just seen him bouncing with life and excitement just a mere hour ago. Now, here he laid. His costume stained with blood, rips all over, exposing mangled and mauled skin. His glowing eye still shone, a twist on the darkness seen in his other one.

"PHIL!" South screamed in a panic, quickly lifting his leg off of the body, a trail of sticky blood and flesh keeping them connected for a few moments longer. He crawled over to him, grabbing both of his shoulders and turning him onto his back. No, no, no, no, no, no, no there is no way! Not Phil, not his best friend, no that can't happen. Especially Phil, he can't be dead! He's not the one that dies, he can't be.

"필 일어나, 필 일어나! 일어나세요! (Phil wake up, Phil please wake up! Wake up!)" His English left him as his heart raced and his mind raced faster. Tears fell from his eyes like rain, landing on Phil's face below him. But no matter what he did or how much he shook him, he didn't move or wake up.

A twig snapped behind South and he didn't hear it.

Ukraine and Canada had been frozen in their places until then. Canada lifted his flashlight and pointed it into the woods, his arm shaky and sweat starting to drip down his forehead. Ukraine sensed the danger and quickly let go of Canada, getting in a fighting stance and preparing herself for a deadly fight. There is no way she's getting killed, not when she just found a will to live.

"South, whatever did that is still here," She warned, scanning the tree line and focusing on every little detail. She waited for movement, nothing catches a person's eye like movement. Everything seemed settled for now, only cause whatever was out there was watching them.

South didn't hear her. All he heard was Phil's voice in the past laughing and yelling.

"South Korea, get over here!" Ukraine hissed through clenched teeth, getting his attention. He noticed what they were doing and he looked behind himself. The flashlight illuminated the empty

bushes that lined the woods. A few scattered patches of leaves were still on the branches, dead and decaying. The only thing he saw was the brown crinkled leaves.

His eyes completely scanned over the looming figure that stood up, towering over them all.

"Get back!" Ukraine shoved Canada out of the way, ultimately sending the creature back into the shroud of darkness without the flashlights' light on it. It didn't matter, she knew where it was.

She jumped it, grabbing onto what felt like fur. The thing growled, what sparse light she had was reflecting off of some surfaces of the thing.

Canada quickly grabbed South by his bag, dragging him away from the edge. South reached out to grab Phil, who he swore he saw move towards him. Maybe he wasn't dead, maybe he somehow survived the ordeal!

Lifting the flashlight back up, he shone his light onto the beast and froze when he saw what it actually was. Expecting a bear or some natural creature, Canada screamed at the unexpected difference.

Ukraine looked up at the face of the creature, now fully revealed. It had a single shiny glazed over eye, placed in the center of his face. Its large mouth gaped open showing rows of bloodied pointed teeth. Elephant looking tusks came from the corners of its mouth, pointed upwards.

"What the hell is that!?" South screamed, finally noticing the monster and recognizing the danger.

Ukraine shook off her shock and tried to figure out how to take this thing down. She looked behind her and saw a tree branch she can break off to use for a bat. As soon as she was distracted, however, the creature grabbed her and threw her at Canada.

"Holy fuck!"

Canada quickly caught her, dropping his flashlight on South's head. South picked it up and held it up for them all. The creature

lumbered towards them, its mouth still opened and what looked like fresh blood dripping off its teeth onto its fur. The light reflected off its eyes and tusks, dulling down its appearance by the brightness.

Then they heard something that sounded like muffled laughter.

The creature stopped and looked down at its feet where the body of Philippines lay. It jerked and twitched, his hands tightly clenched in a fist. His mouth was held tightly shut, no longer slightly gaped open. South noticed how his eyes were shut and how he was moving, registering he was alive.

"Phil!"

South shut his mouth as soon as he opened it. The voice who cried out his friend's name wasn't his. It sounded like-

The creature suddenly raised his hands, derailing South's train of thought. Everyone flinched back, Canada grabbing South's hood and holing onto Ukraine. Instead of doing something violent to them, the creature instead grabbed its own head and twisted its neck.

There was the sound of a click, not a crack of bones being twisted out of their sockets, but like a click of metal. Confused and mortified, they were frozen in place as they watched the thing twist off its head. Like a Scooby-Doo cartoon, the creature was unmasked to show that it wasn't a paranormal thing, it was someone they knew and should have suspected.

"Come on, acting dead shouldn't be hard," Vietnam complained, holing the mask under his arm. The suit, they came to realize it was, looked so much disproportional compared to Vietnam, his head being small for the thing. The mask had been bigger and adjusted to make it fit, but seeing the fairy red hair of Vietnam's head on a towering furry body, well above ten feet, was comical.

"I'm sorry," Philippines sat up laughing loudly now, letting out everything he's held back. From the funny face that South made when he had tripped over him, to the profanity that Ukraine shouted when she was tossed to Canada, and everything he found

numerous in between. When you have to act, trying not to laugh becomes 100 percent harder.

"What she shouted was hilarious, I've never heard-" Phil broke into another laugh as Ukraine gave him a glare "-I've never heard that from her, ever!"

"What the hell, was this all some elaborate joke or something?" She was set on her feet, crossed armed and narrowed eyes. She was fuming mad, and if this was the said Scooby-Doo cartoon, one would see the steam rising off of her. "We could have gotten hurt!"

"I thought you were dead." South's face was long, his voice weak and shriveled, his enlarged eyes staring right at Phil.

Phil turned to see South on his knees on the ground, looking white as a sheet. Whiter than he could be at least, his skin was literally white. A twinge of guilt came when he saw his expression and remembered his crying. He had wanted to get up and console him and tell him that he's fine, but he had to maintain character. He told himself that South would appreciate a well put together scary prank, after what he had told him he had done to America. He and Vietnam had already had this planned for a while, originally Phil was going to be the one in the suit since the creature was of Filipino origin, but it was determined that Vietnam could play a better monster.

"I'm sorry, I wanted to tell you, but you liked being scared so-" Phil was cut off by a blur of colors and a tight feeling wrapped around him. In a second he realized South had run to him and was encasing him in a tight bear hug. Phil hugged him back, really feeling like he actually might die this time.

"We were hoping to get all of you," Vietnam continued to explain their prank while simultaneously getting out of the suit. He had to detach his feet front the stilts and unstrap his waist from the waistband. They made every effort to make the costume move as realistic as possible, all while being very quiet. "Where are America and Russia?"

"Oh, America got hurt, remember?" Canada couldn't shake loose the

fear that was still heard in his voice. He hadn't expected such a thing to happen, in such little time as well. In a whirlwind of events, he thought he lost a friend, lost another one, had his brother get hurt pretty badly, saw someone he knew and cared about dead, almost died and couldn't do anything about it. He didn't know what to do or react, so he reverted to what he normally would do. Be polite and answer the questions.

"They are in one of these houses."

"Okay, but just hang on a second." Ukraine stopped any further conversations. "What the hell is wrong with you two?! We could have gotten hurt, South thought you were fucking mauled to death by something, and you threw me!"

"At Canada, who I knew was going to catch you." Vietnam defended himself, now free from the costume in his regular clothes. As regular as he could at the moment, Phil had begged him to wear the purple Halloween shirt.

"I don't even care about that now," South defended Phil, leaving out Vietnam. "He's alive that's all that matters to me."

Ukraine didn't understand how no one was upset, this crossed the line for pranks in her book. Any sensible person would be furious.

"We may have crossed the line," Phil admitted.

"Did you hear that?"

Vietnam held up a finger, trying to listen to the world around him. He thought he had heard some shuffling in the treetops. Like something breaking branches up there.

"You can stop now," Ukraine began to dust herself off and adjust her costume.

"No, that wasn't us."

"You can't just-"

"Shhhh!"

Ukraine was about to go off at him until Canada held her back, grabbing her shoulders. That country was lucky she was being held back.

Her anger faltered when she heard the branch snapping, too. The sound was right above them, but when they looked all they saw was the darkness. The flashlight did little to show anything, the range not reaching that far.

"Let's go get Russia and America," South suggested, wanting to leave. The residual fear did much to unease him and turn his fight or flight instincts back on. And right now, he'd rather flight.

"Agreed." Vietnam kept his gaze upwards, trying to spot whatever it was in the trees. With so many dark shapes it was almost impossible to tell. The dark clouds were blocking any light from the moon or stars. They had a single flashlight. It wasn't enough.

They all fallowed Canada as he lead everyone to the structure they had left America with Russia. Now that he knew the scares were just fake, he felt a little bit better. It couldn't get worse from here.

"Wait, guys."

This time it was South who stopped everyone.

"Did you hear it?" He asked, pointing up to the trees again.

A loud snap made everyone jump, Phil letting out a loud yelp. Canada raised the flashlight to the sky trying to find whatever had made that noise. A dark silhouette darted across the sky, swiftly passing through the light.

"What the hell was that?" South gasped, hiding behind Vietnam. They all huddle together, keeping their backs to each other and looking outwards for whatever they just saw. They heard the branches being broken around them, bits of them falling to the ground. No one could see where it went, or what it even was.

Ukraine looked to Vietnam and Philippines and shook her head. "Its nothing, it's just them messing with us again." She left the group and continued to walk to the cabin-like structure where they had

left her brother and that American.

"Will you get back over here, it's not us anymore!" Phil begged her, scarily watching the sky above them. He and Vietnam weren't the ones behind this, no one in the group was. Each one of them knew that, but Ukraine. She was persistent that this was another stupid joke from two guys that don't know when to stop.

She ignored them and kept walking.

A screech pierced the air as the black figure fell from the darkness above and landed on the nearest longhouse. Its claws dragged across the bark, the tearing just a small example of the damage they can do.

Canada hurriedly rose the flashlight to the roof to reveal a sickly looking creature with a thin body, almost outlining its bones. It was humanoid in figure but was anything but. Long stringy hair was growing in patches, covering its face and shoulders, great big deer antlers sprouting from its skull. It's dirty yellow nails longer than humanly possible, contrasting greatly with the disgustingly reflective grey skin. Brown dirty fur grew just as broken in patches as it's hair. Hooves replaced its feet, sharp and coming to a point. A necklace of small animal skulls swayed on a line of crusted leather. Veins ran throughout its body, poking through it's exposed translucent skin.

"Wow!" Ukraine rolled her eyes and turned to face the new creature, unaware of the danger she just put herself in. It whipped its head to her with a snap, letting out a guttural whine.

"Who is that in there, huh?"

"Ukraine, get back over here," Canada whispered sharply, about ready to fight this thing if need be. He recognized the thing, knew exactly what it was. He had learned the myths when he was younger, desperate to keep what he had heard just as stories. But now, there it was. Crouching down on the roof, a foul smell radiating from it, turning its neck at an unnatural angle, its pale eyes trained on Ukraine.

A wendigo.

"Don't freak out Canada," Ukraine blew him off. "It's just some freaky cheep consume. See, the skin looks so fake. And the hair, now that's just poor craftsmanship."

The wendigo smiled widely, larger than what it's bone structure would allow. Its skin stretched out wildly, almost ripping and red abrasions quickly formed. In a flash, moving in jagged motions, it climbed off of the roof and down onto the walls, keeping its eyes locked on Ukraine.

"Don't freak out," it said, mimicking Ukraine's voice. The voice was shriveled like it was speaking through a meat grinder but undoubtedly it was Ukraine's.

"What the hell?" She stammered, quickly stumbling back. Fake or not, that shit was scary to see and hear.

"Run, run, fucking run!" Canada screamed, hurrying to grab Ukraine from her frozen spot. It howled, a sudden cold wind sweeping in, shaking the trees to their core. He scooped her up, carrying her in his arms. She quickly wrapped her arms around his neck, looking behind them. The creature jumped to the ground and was scurrying across the dirt. It was a sight straight out of a horror movie.

Everyone ran, South throwing his bag behind him to lose that extra weight. Costly and fragile, it didn't matter to him then. What he wanted to do was get the hell out of there. He looked behind him, seeing Phil almost next to him, Vietnam racing ahead and Canada with Ukraine catching up. Through his legs he could see the crawling figure of that thing, running on all fours like some crazed animal.

Another cold chill raced past them, their breath becoming visible. Almost like smoke, it came out in puffs, quickly blazing past them. Frost crystallized in a path around them, crunching under their feet. The rapidly dropping temperature pushed down on them, quickly biting at any and all exposed skin.

They made it to the edge of the wood line, running right into the

trees with no hesitation. As soon as everyone had stepped off the outlined edge of the clearing, everything stopped. The noises of the creature stopped, the biting cold disappeared into a grateful warmth. Behind them, the wendigo was gone.

This isn't right. They wouldn't disappear, once they chose its prey there is little to be done to stop it. Ukraine had taunted it. No doubt, she was the prey. Where did it go?

"Wh-wh-what," Vietnam panted heavily, and bent over to rest his hands on his knees to catch his breath. "What the hell was that thing? Where did, where did it go?"

"Its called a Wendigo. They are supposed to be just legends, I hoped they weren't real."

"Canada, what are you talking about?" Phil's voice broke in sharp pitches, tears stinging his eyes. The cold had hurt them from the speed that he had been running against it and from the ever-mounting fear.

Suddenly, a scream echoed loudly.

"America!" Canada gasped, recognizing the voice. He dropped Ukraine back onto her feet and sprinted back into the frosty path that they had been running away from. He knew that Wendigos can mimic voices, whatever to draw you to it. But this scream, this one he knew was America's real one. He was always told that you can sense when something was real, and when the trickster was toying with you.

"America, I'm coming, hold on!"

"Canada, come back!" South called out behind him. They were running after the reckless country and the only one who knew what the fuck that thing from before was. They didn't want to be left alone, right then Canada was their only hope.

When Canada reached the longhouse he had left Russia and America in, he skidded to a halt in the doorway. His chest rose and fell rapidly, his heart pounded in his ears, drowning out any of the

others' cries. Inside he found no one. He knew this was the right one, there was a flickering flashlight on the ground next to a camera.

The camera was on, still recording.

Canada picked it up and stopped the recording, replaying what was on the video. No longer a pounding drum in his ears, his heart started to slow down enough for him to hear the others running into the longhouse. Everyone was panting, beads of sweat dripping down from the excessive running and the constant adrenaline.

"What happened here? Where's my brother?" Ukraine looked around, her feet heavy and dragging behind her slightly. She felt weakened, tired and drained. After what she saw, she knew that thing was dangerous. And now her brother is missing. Sure they didn't get along, but that didn't mean she wanted to have him torn to shreds.

No answer was given. No one even had an answer.

Canada pressed the play button, Vietnam standing next to him and peering at the screen. Phil and South noticed this and went to look, too.

As soon as the video played, loud shouts of fear from America filled the room. The screen showed a dark figure rushing at the camera, loud noises of the camera being forcibly moved around mixed in with America's grunts and fits of aggression. They couldn't see anything, just a blur of colors. They didn't hear Russia, only America and the deep grunts of effort from the unknown assailant.

Then suddenly the sound of a blow being landed shut America right up. The camera fell to the dirt in the place Canada had found it at. A few seconds later, covered feet walked past the camera, the bodies of Russia and America begging dragged closely behind. They could hear them being dragged until it faded into silence. In the background you could hear Canada's cries for America, telling him he was coming to save him.

The rest from there was the same frame up until Canada picked it

up.

"Who took them?"

Canada closed the camera and struggled to swallow the lump in his throat. They should have never left him, he should have had just carried him. At least then he could make sure they both would have been safe, and they all could have gotten out of there safe and sound.

Another realization came to him. It was not even a minute after the two were dragged off his voice in the background could be heard. He could've been there, if he ran faster he could have gotten there in time to see where the figure had gone. Or stopped them altogether. If only he was a little bit faster, maybe if he hadn't been so scared of the Wendigo, maybe then he could have helped his brother.

God, he was such an idiot.

"Canada, you're shaking, sit down."

Philippines had his hand on Canada's arm and was gently pushing him down so he could sit. His eyes were moving rapidly, trying to keep up with his train of thought. Water began to form in his eyes, quickly streaming down. In an instant he burst into tears, covering his face in his hand and loudly sobbing into them. Phil quickly wrapped his arms around Canada, coming to tears himself. South set down next to Canada and hugged him with Phil, trying not to cry. Hearing Canada break down like that when he's usually the smile in a dark situation felt like someone was breaking his heart. It was gut-wrenching and he didn't want to hear it any longer.

Vietnam looked onto the ground, feeling sorry for the tall country. He felt a little guilty as well. Perhaps if they hadn't done their prank, maybe all of this wouldn't have happened. Thinking on that some more, he looked to the doorway and recalled back to just earlier when he had made it seem like Phil had gone missing when he really was just getting ready to look all bloodied.

Then his eyes spotted something on the ground.

Curious, Vietnam went over to it and seen it was a clear deep line drawn in the dirt. It was odd, he noted, slowly starting to fallow it. Ukraine was looking for any evidence of a fight from her brother when she noticed Vietnam bent over close to the ground and walking out of the structure they were in.

It was thin like it was made from something that came to a point, he observed. His first instinct was to assume the Wendigo that had just attacked them, but just a single line? It didn't make sense.

He followed it out of the cabin looking building and saw it went out, like a purposeful trial.

Russia had a knife on him. The thought caused Vietnam to sharply inhale, seeing how much that fit. If someone had been dragging you away and you wanted to make sure you were found, wouldn't you try and make a path for people to find you? He could have somehow been trying to make a path for them, or whoever, to find him. How he didn't know. But it didn't matter.

"Don't worry you two," Vietnam looked into the woods that the trail had seemed to lead to. "We're coming."

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With a groan, America slowly came back to consciousness. The side of his head stung, a throbbing pain that was the first to greet him. Why the hell did his head hurt? Ugh, how did he even fall asleep?

As he usually did whenever he woke up, he moved to raise his arms in a stretch but found them restrained. His eyes snapped open when he felt his limited movement, quickly looking down. Rope, strong and new, was tied around his chest, pinning his arms to his side. From the feeling of it, he was tied to a pole. What the hell was all this, where did this come from?

His costume was torn and dirty, ripped and a bloodstain was on his pant leg. It was Halloween, he remembered. Like a flood gate opening, everything came rushing back to him in a moment. Exploring the weird camp looking site, Phil and Vietnam going missing, talking with Russia then everything suddenly going black.
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The effort from thinking that much and hard to remember made his head throb more. In an attempt to soothe his pain, he shut his eyes and tried his best to relax his shoulders. The world seemed to fade in and out, and he would have guessed he was floating away if he didn't know he was tied down.

A slight pain in his leg brought him back to reality.

Too weak to move fast, America strained to blink open his eyes. His brain was yelling at him to close his eyes and fall back asleep. But he knew that probably wasn't going to be good for his health.

A small boy was at his feet, sitting on the back of his knees. His clothes were dark, a hood covering his downward casted eyes. What looked like mud or ash was spread across his hands, coating them and covering the actual color of him. The bandage was off his leg, set down next to him and the boy was properly cleaning his wound. America was still out of it, getting hit in the head that hard isn't good for anyone, so the boy was confident he was safe.

Making sure that the country was still in a daze, he hurried with his work, cleaning the dirt out of the open cut and adding the natural medicine his mother gave him to apply to the wound. When he had that done, he wrapped it up with a new and clean bandage and hurriedly grabbed up all his supplies.

"Hey." America croaked out, his eyes open and looking at the boy. He froze and looked up at him. He had started to breath heavier and started to resist the ropes that tied him down.

"Who-who, who are. You?"

The boy held back a scared squeak and hurried past him, going over to the other larger country. Russia was tied to the same pole, still unconscious and unmoving. The boy felt safer around him, despite his intimidating look. He knew that looks are deceiving and often trusts the opposite.

America turned his head to try and fallow the boy but he walked out of his line of sight. Out of the corner of his eye however, he could make out what looked like Russia tied up behind him. Russia

wasn't speaking nor had moved, so he assumed he was knocked out. America also noticed a fire in the corner of the room, burning big enough to light up the place. This oddly shaped room with jagged edges and non-geometric walls that looked almost moist.

Aaaand it was a cave. Not a room, a cave.

"Where are we?" America asked, hoping to get a response from the unknown boy.

He was met with silence again.

The boy heard him, but he was told not to speak. He was too scared to answer anyways, the one with the stripped face was dangerous. The other one wasn't. He was brought here looking like a wolf, and he liked wolves. So he liked this country.

What he didn't understand was the cuts on his wrists. It wasn't because he didn't know what they were, he did very much know what they meant, he just didn't understand why. Anyhow, the skin was irritated and the scabs were constantly being picked at. His mother explained to him that he was most likely itching it a lot.

Russia groaned when the boy lifted his arm, placing the same paste he had on America's leg on the cuts. They were healed, but him itching them could have opened them back up. Besides it never hurt to be careful, he reminded himself as he placed the proper pad over the cuts and then proceeded to wrap them back up with a new bandage.

"Kid, where are you?"

America was tired of the silence and was, frankly, getting very irritated. Here he was, restrained and tied down and not getting any fun out of it. No, all he had was a major headache, a strangely hungry stomach, and a bandaged leg. Actually, that last one was kind of a plus.

After the boy finished bandaging Russia's other wrist, he gathered all his things and stiffly left the cave, disappearing into the darkened entrance.

"Hey, hey!" America called after him, watching him disappear into the crevice in front of him. "Hey, no wait come back!"

"Ugh, fuck....." Russia groaned, rolling his head.

"Ruski?" America decided to abandon his attempts at getting the kids' attention. "Hey, you good man?"

"I vant to die....."

"Yeah, you sound normal, alright." He half-heartedly chuckled, trying to keep the atmosphere light. It didn't work, and his joke fell flat.

Russia on the other hand barely even heard him. His head ached, but he knew not to fall asleep, especially after being knocked out. For all he knew, he may have had a concussion and its dangerous to fall asleep after those. He had already, so he needed to keep a tight grasp on reality as much as he could.

"Wherrre arrre we?"

"I don't know. In a cave somewhere, but that's about it."

"What happened?"

"I dunno, I remembered being in one of those houses and then that's when things start to get fuzzy."

Russia nodded, knowing that was about all he remembered, too. The more he thought though, the more flashes of a broken memory came through. He had his knife in hand, his sweater being pulled and his body being dragged. His instinct was to fight, but he knew in his state he couldn't. So instead he stabbed the ground deep, but light enough not to make resistance, and created a trail in the dirt.

Where it ended or when it did was forgotten.

He was actually quite used to waking up with a headache and missing memory.

They struggled against the ropes but couldn't loosen them, no

matter which way they pulled or pried. Russia tried to feel around for his knife, but couldn't feel it. Until he saw in front of him, around two meters away from him was his ushanka neatly folded, his wolf ear headband rested on top of it. Next to it, almost alined parallel was his knife. It had some weird pale-looking fabric wrapped around the blade, tied with what appeared to be a brown string.

"Okay, so what the hell arrre ve going to do?" Russia asked, leaning back to try and stretch out the ropes some more.

"I don't know, I don't even know who took us here." America sighed, shutting his eyes and trying to concentrate. He couldn't remember the moments before he was knocked out, maybe a side effect of being nocked out. It's frustrating. "Or what they want with us."

Silence fell upon them, them not knowing what else to do.

"You know, I always wanted to be tied down. I didn't mean like this, though."

Russia frowned a confused and disturbed expression. Slowly, he turned his head to try and see America. "What the fuck? Rrright now? Rrreally?"

"Hey, what else am I going to do? We can't get out, all I got right now is just waiting until someone comes here." America defended himself, shrugging slightly.

"So you make a sex joke?"

"This is me we're talking about. Did you expect anything else?"

"Actually nyet."

"Good, cause the longer we're here, the more creative I'm getting."

Russia couldn't wait for someone to come here and get him to shut his mouth.

A little while later, his hope was fulfilled. Another boy, dressed in similar clothing came silently walking into the cave. America saw

him first, facing the only entrance/exit to the cave.

"Hey, kid, who are you? Where the hell are we?" Immediately America jumped into the questions, hoping for an answer. Russia perked his head up when he heard America, trying to turn his head to see who had walked in.

The boy kept his mouth shut, just as he was told to, and held onto the small mirror in his hands tight as he could. He was less afraid of the country, as his younger brother had been terrified, but he still felt a twinge of fear when he saw the black eyes of the one who causes them harm.

"Can you speak? Are you the same kid from before?"

All the boy did was slowly approach America and held up the mirror to his face. America looks into the mirror and gasped sharply when he sees that his sunglasses were missing, his black eyes open for the world to see.

Thinking quickly, America turned his head away from the mirror and shut his eyes as tight as he could. He didn't want to see that, he didn't want to see his eyes. He didn't want them to be uncovered, especially with Russia just right behind him. He knew he had shown him his eyes before, but that was under the assumption that he wouldn't remember. And he didn't. When he was drunk, he was much more friendly and approachable. But when he wasn't, it was always a roll of the dice.

The boy frowned when he looked away. He had to stare into the mirror for it to work. To try and get his attention, he tapped his forehead. When he was still ignored, he tapped again, this time a little bit harder.

America peeped open one eye, looking at the kid instead of the mirror. What did he want? Why did he want him to look in the mirror? He was well aware of his eyes, he's had them for a very long time.

The kids pointed to the mirror, pointing to his own eyes then back to the mirror.

America shut his eyes and shook his head no.

Growing impatient, the boy tugged on America's cheek, trying to force his head towards the mirror. Fed up, and a little curious, America glared at the boy before hesitantly looking to the mirror. It was his regular reflection, black eyes and all.

But then something happened to them. Slowly, they faded in darkness, America gasping loudly as all the inky black left his eyes, turning them to white. His pupils, red and blue where there shinning. They looked normal, like normal eyes. Tears stung, threatened to fall down. He hadn't seen his reflection with normal eyes in centuries, it was a sight he had forgotten.

But there they where.

"What? How did you do that?" America looked up at the boy who kept a straight face.

"What is it? What is going on?" Russia asked, struggling to turn around and see for himself. In order to do that it seemed like he'd have to break his spine.

The boy smiled, lowering the mirror and facing it downwards. America lowered his head, still trying to see his reflection. Was it just the mirror doing that, or did his eyes really change?

"Amerrrica?"

"I don't know." He breathed out, struggling to wrap his mind around what he had seen. Could his eyes really be normal?

The boy set the mirror down and pulled out more rope. He tied America's feet together, finishing the tie at the knees so he couldn't get up and make a break for the exit. Not that he would make it very far, it's just less of a hassle. So when he was securely tied down, he began to undo the rope that tied him to the pole.

"What are you doing?" America asked, watching him unite the ropes connecting to the pole. Sticking to the pattern, the boy didn't answer and just continued to do as he was instructed to. Take the rope, untie him and tie them around his wrists so he could lead him

to the others.

When he did that, he untied America's feet and allowed him to stand and stretch. He clearly was taller than the small boy and could make a break for it. But attacking a small kid didn't seem right to him, even if he was the one who tied him up. He assumed since he hasn't seen anyone else come in.

The boy took the end of the rope to guide America where he needed to go and started to nudge him forward. He resisted, not knowing what was in the dark, but also not wanting to leave Russia behind all alone. "What about Russia?" He asked, looking back at him.

"What's going on?" Russia asked, giving up on turning around to see.

"He's taking me somewhere. I don't know where." America pulled against the child's insistent tugging. He couldn't wait any longer, they were all waiting for him.

Russia thought about this. They were all at a clear disadvantage, the only thing that could provide any information is the child that was with them. But even that there provided some form of danger, the unknown of where that child would take America or if there was anyone else in the cave. Russia didn't know if anyone else had eyes on them, or why the kid wasn't talking.

"Go. See what's going on, I'll trrry and get out of herrre."

America nodded and allowed himself to be lead by the child, straining his eyes to see in the dark. He didn't want to leave Russia there with no way to defend himself, but he needed to see what was going on. Why they were here. Why no one was talking.

When the two had walked off, the second older brother dressed just like the past two came in with a blindfold. Russia heard someone walk in and looked up to see the new boy. He could tell the difference between the two from their height, one was just slightly taller than the other and this one's dark clothes were different in style.

"What do you vant?" He asked, not even expecting an answer.

The boy took the cloth and covered his eyes, swiftly pulling the two ends behind his head and tied them tightly down. Russia trashed his head back and forth, trying to resist the blindfold. It didn't matter though, the kid got it on his head with little trouble.

Then he heard the child leave, his footsteps fading behind him. The only sound left was the crackle of a fire.

He waited in the silence, trying his best to get out of the ropes. He knew that they had a point where they would break, where the amount of stress that was put on them would push it past the breaking point and the threads would tare. He just had to keep pulling and pushing until he could get there.

Closing footsteps halted his movements. He listened, not being able to tell if there were many pairs he heard or if it was the echoing from the cavern.

It wasn't until he heard multiple voices coming closer did he know for certain that there was defiantly more than one person coming, possible around three or more. But the footsteps sounded small and light, like the child that was just there.

Are there more kids down here?

"Shhh!" One sharply hissed, the first clear voice he heard. It sounded like a male.

Another boy whispered something he couldn't hear back.

Deciding not to say anything, he sat there patiently. By the sound of their closer steps, they began to gather at the entrance of the cavern opening. Possibly waiting there to see what Russia would do. The child from earlier looked nervous and left in a rush. They were scared. But as children are, they were curious, too. Maybe he can use that to his advantage.

"O'we:gë' të'jö'. Neh Othayo:nih. (See, there he is. The Wolf.)"

Someone shuffled foreword.

"Dehs-dahs!(Stop!)"

"Hë'ëh. (No.)" He responded.

Russia stayed still, painting a mental image of where the boy was in the room. He couldn't tell who this one was if he had been the one that came in or not. He hadn't heard any of their voices to be able to tell. What he could tell, was that he was slowly walking closer, and another person was slowly fallowing him.

The boy was right next to him when he felt the light tap on his shoulder. He flinched away, not expecting the child to be bold enough to touch him.

"Who are you?"

Unaware they spoke English, he was quiet in shock for a second. Then he sputtered out, "Rrrussia."

"Why are you friends with the bad man?"

"Not so loud. You know we are not allowed to speak English." The other boy who had followed him hastily reminded him, speaking in a hushed tone. He looked to the rest of his brothers, still standing in the entrance watching them. They all knew what he had meant. Speaking in any language other than their own was frown upon, almost forbidden. Their mother didn't want them to lose more words then they already had.

"Bad man?" Russia asked out loud, turning to the place where he heard the first voice ask. He'd address why they weren't supposed to talk in English second.

"The one with the striped face." The first one responded.

"Amerrrica?"

"Hanödaga:nyas. (President [Town Destroyer].)"

Not understanding what that meant, he decided to say, "You got me, kid. Sometimes I vonder why I'm frrriends vith him, too."

The kid in front of him laughed, a few scattered ones from a few outside the cavern. They obviously got the joke, Russia thought smiling to himself. An idea popped in his head and he felt a shimmer of hope. If he can get the kids to like him, or at the very least trust him enough, he can coax them into removing the blindfold and then untie him. Possibly even let him go. The last one was a stretch though, so he wouldn't let his hopes get up too high.

"Who arrre you?"

Their voices stopped and he waited a second. When he decided that they wouldn't answer, he asked another question.

"Why kan't you speak English?"

Silence.

"Wherrre am I?"

"In a cave." The hesitant one replied, sounding more confident and comfortable. "It's where we go when everyone feels threatened."

"Who is 've'?"

"Us, our mom, and the other older ones."

Ambiguous answers it is then.

"Wherrre is Amerrrica?"

"With the adults."

"Why is he vith zem?"

"So they can try and stop him from hurting us."

Russia frowned. "How is he hurrrting you?"

Silence met him once more. He gave himself a few seconds to breathe so he wouldn't get frustrated. That's the last thing he wanted to do, he could scare away the potential of these kids trusting him. Kids hate authority and anger. They appeal more to

those who act silly and are nice to them.

"Okay. Is zerrre anything you vant to ask me?"

"Why do you talk funny?" A younger boy from the group standing further away quickly asked.

"Don't say that that's mean." Another one next to him scolded.

Russia laughed lightly, trying to ease any tension that could have rose up. He didn't want to appear insulted, it actually wasn't the first time someone had asked that question to him anyways. Wasn't the first, and it won't be the last.

"I have accent," he explained. "English isn't my firrrst language. меня зовут россия. (My name is Russia.)"

"Onödowá'ga:' ni'gya:soh," the voice of the boy who spoke to him first said.

Russia blinked. "What did you say?"

"My name."

"I didn't underrrstand it."

"I know."

Russia exhaled, knowing that the kid was being a little shit on purpose. He didn't need to see his face to know he was smugly smiling.

"He's safe." The boy told the others, looking to the ones standing to the side. That was the cue to know that they could approach the stranger and come closer if they wanted. The two older brothers were the ones who deemed if people were safe, and in order to get to the younger ones, you'd need to approach the two elder brothers first.

Russia turned his head when he heard the others hurrying in, excitedly scurrying to stand next to the other two. They moved so fast he couldn't tell how many there actually were. But he knew by

the different voices there was around four.

"You look strong, are you a warrior?"

"Why did you have a tail and ears on you?"

"Can I wear your gasdo:wä' (headdress)?"

"It's not a gasdo:wä', look at it."

"What is it? It's a weird headdress, there are no feathers."

Russia recoiled from the bombardment of questions, not expecting the kids to open up to him so much and as quickly as they did.

Instead of giving himself a headache by trying to answer all the questions, he answered the last one he heard. "Its kalled ushanka. It's my hat, my father gave it to me. Kan I have it back?"

They whispered in another language before deciding that he could have it back. It was just a hat, and they had already looked over it demeaning it was safe. Russia felt his ushanka being placed on his head, crooked until someone else adjusted it correctly.

So far so good. Just small favors, then he'll slowly mount up to more. He just had to choose his actions wisely.

Meanwhile, America had braced himself for the worst. To be forced to his knees, a blade taken to his neck, slicing his head clean off.

Instead, he was gently pushed down and he took that as an invitation to sit down. He had been lead to another natural caved room, much bigger than the one he and Russia had been tied up in. A fire was in the center of the room, creating a comforting warmth to battle away the natural coolness of the cave.

Sitting across from him was a few dark figures, faces all hidden by the shadows of their hoods. They sat silent, hands neatly folded in their crossed-legged lap. Their lack of movement and voice freaked him out and made him feel like he was on trial for murder. He didn't even attempt to run after the boy untied his hands, freeing him completely of all his restraints.

He was too scared.

Did he piss off a cult or something?

Is this the Illuminati? Man, he didn't mean to piss them off, he just thought some rumors and conspiracies would be funny to hear and tell about. He didn't know they were still around.

"You are a very difficult country," a woman said. She was the one sitting across from him, the heat rising from the fire distorting his view of her.

"I've been told," America muttered, looking down into the fire.

"Wiseass," he heard someone mumbled. He looked over in time to see the one sitting next to him hit their arm.

"We have spent years getting you to learn," the woman stole America's attention back, speaking in a louder volume as an unsaid warning to the others to cut it out. The one who had spoken tightened their lips and looked down in their lap.

"To listen to us," she continued. "And you keep choosing to ignore."

"Well, I haven't heard anything from any cult-like group like you guys." America leaned foreword, trying to see any of their faces but they were too covered up. He was desperately trying not to act disrespectful, he didn't have a death wish after all. At the same time, he was fucking kidnapped, tied up, hurt and dragged into what looked like would be some ritualistic sacrifice and the head honcho woman dude was speaking in riddles. He was pissed.

"If you really want someone to notice you, talk like a normal country! Don't fucking kidnap them, please. I already have a friend who is not shy about kidnapping, and I don't need to worry 'bout strangers doing it, too." America was referring to Japan. He had once been stolen in the night and woke up in her house, interrogated for weird questions and then knocked out with what he assumed was chloroform. Part of him believes that was a dream, but another part wouldn't put it past her to do that. He hasn't asked her about it though and is frankly kind of scared to.

"We are not strangers." Said a different female to his right.

"Oh yeah, who are you then?"

"We are the people who were here before you." One on his left said.

"We are the people who helped raise you," said one on his right.

"We are the people who taught you how to survive."

"We are the people who you shunned and forgot."

"We are the people who you tore apart and continue to harm."

They had gone back and forth, some on the sides didn't even speak. He never realized how many there actually were until then. He had known that there were a lot of people around the fire, but the amount had just settled in.

The last one to speak was the woman who sat across from him. And what she said, sent chills down his spine.

"We are the people who gave you your eyes."

**((Thank you everyone for being so patient. Like seriously, thank you sooo much. I know this one took FOREVER!!!! My apologies. My wrists and hand is better (now that I actually stopped using it and let it heal) so chapters should be updated more frequently. Note the word should be. Plus I got thanksgiving break coming up, so more time to write.**

**Also, I had an idea (le gasp another one, those never end well) because I use Google Translate for a lot of the languages, or whatever lesser-known sites, like a weeb so I can be as accurate as possible. But that's a bot, so how about I give the language that I need a translation for on my message board thing and whoever speaks the language can help me make the sentences grammatically correct. I blame my OCD for my desire to make everything as perfect as possible, but I also want to respect the languages and if someone actually speaks the language, I don't want them to read some Google Translate bullshit.**

**I dunno, that's if you all want to. Figured it would be a cool little way to interact with the readers, and give you guys little pieces to upcoming chapters so you can guess what it's about by what countries are saying.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Drinking Buddies (Smut)

**(Hey, while I was trying to get ideas for the next chapter, I was suddenly reminded of a chapter I had promised. Something short (my kind of short) and sweet, while the other chapter is being written. Have fun. Also, I wanted to get this done today so I skipped out on the accents. I might come back and edit those in, cause I fucking love Scottish and Irish accents.**

**And honestly I would I put out a warning, but no one follows those anyways XD)**

**Narrator's POV**

As the norm, with any celebration, Ireland went out to drink.

"Happy Easter!" He cheered, waving around an empty glass mug with the beer foam still trickling down the sides. In his intoxication, he heard himself say Halloween, but anyone sober enough to care or take noticed knew his error. No one bothered to correct him, though.

Ireland didn't want to encourage the stereotype that he drinks a lot, no one likes being patronized. But then again, a damn good drink is a damn good drink.

"Figured I'd find you here." Someone said behind him, their hand being set gently on his shoulder.

It didn't matter if he was drunk or sober, Ireland could always pick out that rough voice and thick accent better than he can anything else.

"Eeeeeeyyy, Scottie my boy!" He turned around with a huge smile plastered over his face, no doubt making him look drunker than he actually was. Seeing him with the small trickle of beer from his mouth, a more disheveled look to his clothes and the messy red hue over his face was nothing abnormal, especially here, and something

that always amused Scotland. Ireland was less predictable, more chaotic and louder than he normally would be (yes that's possible) which Scot always enjoyed, as it brought in a certain spice to what could be a regular get together with drinks.

What he didn't expect was for him to start before he got any drinks in himself.

"You're almost plastered man," Scot sat down on the stool next to him laughing under his words. Ireland gave him another teeth filled smile, his hat slipping off his head and covering the top of his eyes.

"What?!" He scoffed, blowing a raspberry like the immature country he could be. "This is nothing, this is just like a heavy buzz."

Whether it was true or not, only the Lord knew. Ireland can down an impossible amount of drinks and feel nothing, or take a few shots and want to Irish dance on the roof. Actually, that's an unclear analogy, sober Ireland would do that, too. He's done it once just for five pence.

Scot got himself set up for a few drinks, too, loosening his shirt collar and leaning against the back of his seat. He's been feeling tense lately, so he figured meeting up with his best friend would help him. Anyone else would just annoy him and he'd most likely start a fight.

A few rounds of drinks later, Scotland was ready to attempt that Irish dancing mentioned before. Never on the roof, not with so little people to watch, but maybe on the counter. That way he could make sure people witnessed how incredible he can be. The more he thought about it, the more he wanted to. He didn't have his bagpipes with him, which would make his stunt all the better, but surely he could do that with his own vocal cords. It'll be easy, he was a proud Scotsman! There was no challenge he wouldn't do!

"Hey, hey, Scot-" Ireland held a fist over his mouth, letting out a loud belch "-I can't, I can't. I don't understand why you look so goddamn angry all the time!"

The two burst out laughing, the bartender then getting annoyed

with the loud outbursts that distracted them from their job. It was bad enough they had to deal with a loud German and his almost equally loud boyfriend, he didn't want to deal with these two, too.

"I do! I really do!" Scotland howled with laughter, hugging his stomach. Why he found that simple sentence funny wasn't in reason, but it didn't matter to him at the moment. All he cared for was laughing with Ireland. Until he accidentally knocked over his glass cup and it shattered on the floor.

"Okay boys," the bartender said, slamming his hand down on the counter, with his best smile on his face. Ireland doesn't own this pub, a fact he forgets when he's drunk but one the bartenders are used to dealing with. The one working tonight was Belgium and it wasn't the first time she had to make these two leave. And it wasn't the first time tonight one of them broke a glass, but it would be the last.

"I gotta cut you off, for health reasons, " she lied through her teeth with the smile anyone in customer service could recognize.

If they were sober, they would've called her bullshit. But with muggy minds, they only complained begrudgingly and started getting ready to leave. Ireland paid for the drinks, Scot pitching in and the two stumbled out of the bar together. They had their arms draped over their shoulders, each using the other for support as they did their best to walk in a direction.

It was late, Halloween for the participating countries over, and everyone was defiantly inside at this point in time. It was quiet, dark and chilly, the only available lighting from the blocked out moon, street lights, and the sparse passing cars.

As usual, Scotland and Ireland started their drunken journey home. The two stumbled, swaying their legs in a loose and dramatic manner. It resembled what a cartoon character would look like trying to sneak past someone, except more uncoordinated and twice as exaggerated.

Too drunk to walk all the way home, Scot always crashed at Ireland's house. He lived close by, a decent walk away while Scot

was further away. They always made jokes about how Ireland lived really close to a pub, adding to the running joke that Ireland was a drunk. A joke based on facts, if they were both honest with each other.

"And it's no, nay, never!" Ireland hiccuped, singing loudly and horribly. "No, nay, never, no more! And I'll play the wild rover no never, no more!"

"Shhhhhh!" Scot hissed at him loudly, only adding to the problem. "You're going to wake up the entire street! Then you're gonna be in trouble."

"Ehhh, trouble can kiss my ass!" Ireland cheered to the sky, erupting in more fits of laughter. Scot joined him, trying to and failing to cover both of their mouths. He couldn't coordinate his right hand and accidentally poked Ireland's eye. He yelled in pain and covered his eyes.

"Fuck, sorry!" Scot laughed loudly, not really feeling too sorry. That was funny as all hell!

"That's it, you're officially mean." Ireland spat out that half thought out insult, rubbing his eye. Despite the pain, he was still laughing away with his buddy.

"Aaand you're officially home!" Scot stopped in front of a house. Ireland blinked a few times, waiting for the fuzzy image to clear up.

"That's not my house."

Scot himself blinked and looked around. Then he turned himself and Ireland to the house next door and said, "Aaand now we're home!"

Once inside, they thankfully had the right idea to go to bed. The house was nice, not the cleanest or messiest, but livable. Ireland was a little tight on money, but he managed to pull himself through. It helped, kind of, that he didn't live alone. Ireland had a brother, who's name Scot had completely forgotten by that point. He usually wasn't ever there, though, that much he remembered.

"I'm sleeping in your bed," Scot muttered as he began to stumble to the bedroom.

"No you're not, I am. You get.... You get the couch." Ireland childishly pouted, sticking out his bottom lip and everything.

"You take it. The bed is comfier." Scot ignored the pouting and pushed open the bedroom door and collapsed onto the bed.

"Nooooo."

Not seeing him get up, Ireland decided to just sleep next to him. What's the worst that can happen anyway? He like Scotland, so everything would be fine.

"Moove." He nudged Scot over and crawled into the bed, not bothering to cover himself up with the blankets. He did, however, take off his hat and slipped his suspenders off his shoulders. He'll take them off fully when he woke up.

Scotland groaned and rolled back to where he was, even though it put him on top of Ireland. They both didn't notice, or cared, and quickly fell into a drunken sleep.

Ireland woke up a little while later, still slightly intoxicated but regaining some of his senses. But with that, he wanted another drink. Just a little more to put him to sleep again, seeing how it was close to 4 am and there was no way he would be staying up now. And he wasn't planning on waking up early anyway.

He moved to sit up but a heavy weight kept him down. It was then he noticed the body laying on top of his, its blue skin and deep snores.

That was Scotland!

Why was he laying on him?

An involuntary blush spread across his cheeks as his eyes grew wide from the presence of the country. In his drunken mind, he didn't know what to do. He was comfortable, yes, and there wasn't anything readily wrong with the situation, just that his life long best

friend was laying on top of him. His brain was too sluggish to determine the correct path of action. He knew enough that he didn't want to forcefully wake him, he gets crabby waking up forcefully and suddenly. Especially when it's this early, he'd rather not be on the receiving end of one of his angry rants.

Lucky for him, depending on how you see it, Ireland's movements to sit up actually began to wake Scotland up. Gradually, reality came to him and he mumbled a few curses under his breath before deciding to get a little bit more comfortable and fall back asleep.

Eyes shut, he lifted his head to slip his arms under what he thought was a pillow to help fluff it up a bit to support his head. At the same time, he shifted his legs and tried to turn slightly on his side. Quickly, he realized something was wrong.

He opened his eyes, staring into the equally wide eyes of Ireland. For a moment, that's all they did. Frozen there in time, unsure what would be the next course of action. His arms were wrapped around him, his legs straddling his lower abdomen all the way down to his legs. A clear red hue was painted brightly across Ireland's face, his lips stretched almost needlepoint thin and he swore he could see the beginnings of small beads of sweat gathering on his forehead.

"Uhhhhh....." Was all Scot was able to say. Shit, the hell was he gonna do? Move obviously, but he didn't feel like it. One he was too fucking tired for that, and two, he didn't want to. He was comfortable and had just gotten there.

"You're cute." Ireland slurred, keeping his startled expression and not even recognizing he said that.

"And you're still drunk," Scot set his head down, a little out of it and kind of ignoring that it was Ireland's chest. Instead of letting what he said affect him fully, he decided to ignore the heat on his face and shut his eyes. He was about ready to fall back asleep until he felt his hands get grabbed and he was jerked forward.

"Come here pretty boy~." Ireland smiled at Scotland who was now only a few centimeters away from his face. "I don't want you to leave so soon."

"I'm not going anywhere," Scot said in matter the fact voice. He could feel Ireland's breath on him, as well as he could smell it. Reeked of Guinness. Even so, his eyes lingered on his white lips long enough for Ireland to notice. "You. You have my hands, you idiot."

Ireland almost didn't hear him. All he noticed was the warmth of Scot's hands interlocked with his own, the comfortable weight and temperature of his body pressed against his. He was flirting with him and had purposely pulled him closer for a reason. It intrigued him that Scotland wasn't doing anything to prevent or fight against his advancements.

Was that a silent invitation to keep going?

"We should make out," Ireland suggested, deciding to be upfront about his intentions. "Have a little fun~."

"You sure this is not all that beer talking?" Scot refrained from showing a lot of emotion, or how much he had started getting antsy. They were so close to one another, all Scot had to do was lean forward and started moving his hips against Ireland's to get things started. But he wasn't sure if that was what Ireland would have really wanted. He didn't know how sober he was, if not. Hell, he didn't even know how sober he was!

"Well, it's coming out of my mouth, ain't it?" Ireland joked, slowly starting to lean forward. His choice of words and his weakened slur reassured Scot he knew what he was doing. Why was a whole nother question, though. "And you're not saying no."

He realized he was right. He hadn't made any attempt to stop him, to get off of him or anything. The word "no" never came to mind.

Did he want to? Ireland was his best friend, they were as close as anyone can be. But in his position, his thoughts had wandered off ahead of them. He was a very attractive country, no doubt about it. The way his hands had caught his, the warmth from his body below him, and the suggestive position they were in.

"Let's dance," Scot smirked, closing the small gap between them,

smashing their lips together. At first, Ireland was surprised, expecting Scot to say no or rule it off to his alcohol. It certainly gave him the confidence to say what he said, but he knew he was thinking clearly (sort of). He knew what he was doing. To prove it, he kissed back.

It was soft, almost hesitant. As soon as they got into a rhythm, though, it got rougher and eager. Scot asserted his dominance, lifting himself up to access Ireland's mouth easier and pinning his hands down to each side of him. He licked his bottom lip, and Ireland complied with opening his mouth, Scot quickly taking advantage of this.

The room quickly grew warmer, any of the creaks and noises from the house quickly being drowned out. After a moment, the quieter environment was filled with heavy panting as Ireland and Scot separated, both looking into each other's eyes. That's all there was. Just the two of them in their own little world, as happy as can be, comfortable and safe.

"I like you," Ireland finally admitted, his voice quiet and breathy. Scot smiled and laid his head back down in the crook of Ireland's neck, trying to get comfortable again.

"I like you, too." Scot felt his face grow warm with blush, a reaction he was glad he could hide. Oh, how his stomach was doing flips. Even with that, however, his body wanted to sleep. But his mind was far from tired and wanted to relish in his hold of Ireland. Just a little while longer.
They've held each other like this before, sitting so close together that a few countries had already assumed they were dating. Scotland didn't see it, it was something they did all the time platonically. Now was different. They actually kissed, made out with the tounges dancing together, the whole nine yards. He hadn't realized how good that felt, how this sudden hunger could drive him mad.

What then troubled him was the amount of alcohol they had just consumed prior. Ireland tended to get drunker then Scot, wasted and out of his mind. Was this no different? Did Ireland just say he liked him because they were friends, or because that is what just

popped in his head?

Ireland nudge Scot with his shoulder, asking, "Hey, you didn't fall asleep on me did ya?"

Scot shook his head no.

"Good," Ireland smiled, releasing his hands so he could grab Scot's ass. As soon as he squeezed it, Scot jumped and shot his head up.

"Ireland, are you daft?!" He exclaimed but was held in place by the restraints of his arms.

"Only slightly." He joked, his slurring lessening. Without any more hesitation, he lifted his head up to connect their lips again. Ireland couldn't wait any longer, wrapping his arms around Scot practically forcing him into it. He wasted no time in slipping his tongue into his friend's mouth, claiming everything as his. Scot, over the initial shock, kissed and fought back to regain his dominance.

His blue hands traced down the sides of Ireland and slipped into his shirt. He smirked into the kiss when he felt Ireland shiver under his touch and his breath hitch slightly. He slowly became submissive, allowing Scotland to tease his sensitive nipples, rubbing and slightly twisting them. Breaking from the kiss, the Scotsman trailed down to his neck, easily accessible with his loosened shirt collar. Trying to get more of a rise out of him, he wasted no time and began to kiss trying to find that sweet spot. As soon as Ireland jerked upwards, Scot focused on that area and began to abuse it, sucking and biting to leave a sure mark.

"Fuck~." Ireland bit his lip, digging his fingers into Scot's vest. A warm heat started to grow in his groin region and he knew that an obvious hard-on was showing. He rubbed his leg against Scot's crotch in a deliberate attempt to get an erection out of him as well.

Scot groaned into Ireland's neck, the vibrations in it causing Ireland to let out a quiet moan. As if that sound was the first domino pushed, it quickly led into a whirlwind of heat that neither of them expected to happen tonight.

Scotland lifted himself up more so he could slide his hands down and start to unbuckle the belt of Ireland's pants. Swiftly, he undid the clasp for his already loose suspenders and slid his pants off his legs. He undid his own pants, taking them off and unceremonially casting both his and Ireland's trousers to the ground.

To further get comfortable, Scotland took off his vest as well. As soon as he pulled the clothing over his head, he was greeted with the sight of Ireland right next to his erection poking through his underwear. He watched as his best friend, or at this point his lover, grab the waistband and pulled the cloth down. Ireland got excited seeing the length of Scot's dick, something he would never admit to, but has thought of before.

He teased the tip, slowly flicking his tongue up and down, turning into circular movements until he took his length in his mouth. Scot bit his bottom lip, throwing his head back in pleasure. The way Ireland bobbed his head up and down, retreating to the tip and sucking, twirling his tongue around like it was candy then went back down, fed the fire growing up his shaft and groin. A gag reflex nonexistent, he was able to take his entire length and didn't choke when Scot grabbed the back of his head and began to push his head up and down.

"Ireland, I'm close," Scot warned through clenched teeth, not realizing he hadn't released his hold on the country. With little choice, he prepared for Scot to unload in his mouth. When he did, letting out a moan, Ireland shut his eyes from the salty taste but swallowed anyways.

When he noticed he still had his hands on Ireland's head and had given him no way to move, he apologized, "Sorry, lad."

Ireland smiled, a lust-filled stare in his eyes, grabbing his loosened shirt collar and pulling him down slowly. "It's okay. Why don't you make up for it, pretty boy?"

They both kissed shortly again, the taste of Scot's semen still in Ireland's mouth. It was interesting, the random thought that popped into Scot's head. Ignoring it, he pulled them apart and place his hand on Ireland's chest to push him back down onto the bed. With

his other hand, he held up two fingers and placed them in front of Ireland's mouth. Knowing what to do, he opened his mouth and started to skilfully suck on his fingers. One would think this is not the first time he has done this, his motions arousing Scot more and he felt himself growing hard once again.

When he deemed them coated enough, Scot took his fingers out of Ireland's mouth and spread apart his legs. Ireland felt nervous at the exposure, the cold air rushing to greet his open skin. He only visibly shivered when he felt Scot trace his fingers around his opening. He was thankful Scot wasn't much of a tease, he had been waiting for this moment for a while. Shamefully fantasizing about it, even at night as he pleasured himself.

Scot slipped one finger into his hole, watching Ireland's movements carefully. He didn't want to hurt him or make anything uncomfortable. He saw his hands grasp the blankets in anticipation and he was looking down at him, panting slightly with a clear red blush across his entire face. He inserted his other finger and began to pump in and out slowly, relishing in Ireland's reactions. He smiled as he saw the smaller man's stance crumble until he was laying fully down on the bed, twisting the bed sheets around his hands.

He let out a deep moan, unable to keep them in any longer. Scot once again smirked, pumping his hand faster and spreading his fingers in a scissoring motion. To add to his pleasure, he grabbed his balls and began to massage the sensitive skin.

"Ahh~ Ahhh, oh f-fuck!~" Ireland cried, arching his back and trying to do anything to amplify his pleasure. He couldn't wait until he was filled to the brim, being pounded into until he couldn't walk. His eagerness made him tremble even more and manage out in a strained moan, "Come on Scot, fuck me already."

He was thrusted forward, his hips in the air and his legs being held apart by Scot. He leaned down close to his face to whisper, "you better be careful what you wish for." His voice sent a shiver down his spine, arousing him even more.

Deeming him prepared enough, he grabbed his dick that had been

leaking with precum and stroked it to thoroughly coat it. It may not be lube, but it would have to do for now. With little warning, he lined it up with Ireland's hole and thrusted in.

Ireland cried out a loud moan from being stretched so far so fast. Almost immediately, Scot had hit his prostate. "Ahh shit!" He pulled and tugged on the sheets, ripping them off the corners.

"You good?" Scot didn't move just yet, hoping he hadn't gone too far.

Ireland looked up, a drooling mess, and incoherently made a sound of reassurance. He wiggled his hips to try and get Scot to hurry up, his hunger almost painful.

Given the okay, Scot pulled out slightly and slammed back into him, earning a loud moan from the one under him. He hadn't been stretched this far, and by god he loved it. The pressure moving in and out of him sent waves of tingling pleasure rocking through him. It felt so good, every thrust hitting him right where it made him see stars. It got all the better as Scot moved faster and faster.

Scot began to lose his composure and leaned over Ireland, placing each hand on the side of him. He shifted a little more to keep his pace and the force that had Ireland a moaning mess under him. Those sounds were the music to his ears, drilling into him harder and faster to get more.

"Fucking hell, Ireland." Scot could barely hold open his eyes to see the sweet sight below him. Beads of sweat were on Ireland's forehead, a bright red hue across his face, his eyes shut from pleasure and his tongue practically hanging out of his mouth as he panted and moaned. On his neck, the hickey he left for him was a mark as he was his and no one else's.

"I ahhh! IIII'm, fuck, Scot I'm ahh close!~"

"So am. I," he grunted, refusing to release first. He needed to make Ireland scream his name in an orgasm before he could do anything. "Fuck, cum for me, Ireland. Cum for me!~"

Ireland grabbed Scot's shirt as if that could help steady him. He pulled Scotland closer, burying his head into his neck, moving his hands under his shirt to dig his nails into his back. He dug in harder when he felt a hand clasp around his own hard member, pumping up and down in sync with the trusting of Scot pounding into Ireland's ass. It was all enough to send Ireland over the edge, making him see white. A hot bolt of electricity shot through him, causing him to wrap his legs tightly around Scot pulling him closer.

"Scotland!!~" He shouted in an almost animalistic moan.

He felt Ireland release under him, the liquid squirting over the both of them. His last few trusts were sloppy, but the walls of Ireland clenched over Scotland's cock tightly and forced an orgasm out of him. "Ireland!!!~" He moaned out as he released with his finale trust. He filled Ireland to the brim, his seed spilling out, running down his skin and onto the bed below them.

Scotland collapsed onto Ireland, both panting and trying to catch their breaths. Groaning, he pulled out of Ireland, letting the rest of his seed spill out. Now incredibly sensitive, Ireland let out a weak quiet moan.

With what strength he had left, Scot rolled over to lay down next to Ireland. His eyes were droopy and the thought of sleep was such a good idea to him right now. He'll worry about the clean up later.

He heard a yawn next to him and knew that Ireland had his energy well spent, too. He felt him shift, an arm wrapping around his chest. Scot opened his eyes to see Ireland snuggling up next to him, looking cute and peaceful as he fell asleep.

Cute?

Too tired to care to overthink anything, he kissed the forehead of Ireland and decided to bask in the euphoria instead. He was cute, he'll give him that. Unfortunately, Scot knew he didn't want a relationship. He was horrible at maintaining them, in his opinion.

Whatever this was, he needed to end it as soon as they woke up.

Even if he kind of didn't want to.

**(Well, that was fun. Yeah, I'm just going to leave this here. Bye!)**

**~ Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**Galaxy**

# Halloween Part 3

**Narrator's POV**

So far, Russia's plan was working. The kids had started to lower their defensive shields and had taken off his blindfold after awhile. He had no idea how long it has actually been, if it was still even the night of Halloween, but he knew that it was almost an hour since these kids had come in. He hadn't seen nor heard anything of America since he left.

There was a total of six kids, two older ones almost equal in height and intimidation, one smaller than all the others and he guessed was the youngest, and the other three were in the middle of the height and age range. Their attire almost matched to a tee, same dark clothes to hide what they actually wore underneath and their skin. The skin exposed was painted a dark color, almost like a dark brown. The only way to tell who was who besides height and voices was the weird feathered caps they wore. They all had a different amount of feathers sticking up above the rest. One, the youngest, didn't have any feathers standing up.

"Kan you tell me yourrr names now?" Russia asked for the first time since he had initially brought it up. He thought with their newfound trust in him, he could get more answers from them. Before his patience ran out that is.

The siblings all shared nervous looks. They had begun to like Russia, or as they called him in each of their native tongues "The Wolf" because of his appearance and the fake appendages he wore when he was brought in. But to go against what they were instructed to do? They didn't know if that was possible, even if they really did like this outsider. And how he talked funny.

"We where told not to." One of the elder ones, the one with three feathers, gave Russia the most useful information he had been able to get out of them as of late. It was far better than the silence he

had been previously given.

“By who?” Russia pressed for more, testing his bounds and luck.

After a moment, “our . . . Mom.”

Russia hadn't heard any female voices, only male. The kids in front of him were all male as well. That statement confirmed and rid of any doubt that there was defiantly more countries here, older ones at that. Great, that means he will be greatly outnumbered and at a disadvantage. He needed to convince these kids to help him escape, find America and get the hell out of dodge.

“Wherrre is she? Yourrr mom.”

“With the others. They are talking to America.” A second older one, this one with only one feather up and one down, answered. “I thought they would be done by now.”

That sent an ice spike right into Russia’s stomach. Supposed to be done by now? That’s incredibly ominous, a thing that Russia knew they couldn’t afford. If things went sour, which is entirely plausible with how America runs his mouth and will no doubt do that despite the situation. He needed to get out of here now, find America and find the surface.

“Why am I here?” Russia began to divert attention and distract the kids so he could work on untying his hands. If he could remember the hostage training he did with his dad, he could identify the knot and get himself free. Its times like these where he was happy that his dad was paranoid and prepared him for situations like this.

“I don’t know.” One Feather shrugged. “You were brought in with Hanödaga:nyas, that’s all we know. I think some other people we know that live up in the cold knew you, though. Or your ancestors.”

“What?” Russia was caught off guard. Knew him? How could they know him, but he not know anything of the sort. Much less his ‘ancestors’. Wait, his father or grandfather must have mentioned something. A faint memory poked in the back of his mind, trying to

wait for a keyword, sight or sound to release it. Instead, it stayed in the back as Russia tried to desperately grasp it. His failure made him determined to get out of here, and he quickly got back to untieing his hands.

“Yeah, we don’t talk to them much,” Three Feathers tapped his chin. “America’s brother might know of them.”

“Kanada? What does he know?” Narrowing his eyes, Russia thought about the said country. Did he have anything to do with this? Did he come up with some scheme to get Russia away from Ukraine? Uh, no, stop that. Canada is a nice country, he wouldn’t do that to anyone. That’s just your overly protective brother instincts showing.

A hand was set on his shoulders and he looked up to see the youngest one, No Feathers, standing beside him. “We can see what you’re doing behind your back.”

Fuck.

In his momentary distraction, the kid must have noticed his movements. He was in no doubt screwed over now. In a moment of desperation, he pleaded, “Untie me, please. I haven’t done anything wrrrong.”

No Feathers moved towards Russia, his hands reaching out to do as he had asked. His elder brother grabbed his shoulder and jerked him backward. “We can’t, rememberer?”

“But he hasn’t done anything wrong. And you know what they’re doing is wrong, too!” He protested, pulling himself free from the three feathered one. Russia noted how the youngest was quick to object to the authority, and how he was the one doing most of the talking. The three feathered one must be the oldest.

He looked down at the angered face of his brother and his eyebrows furrowed together. It wasn’t because he had spoken lies, it was the opposite. He knew what he was saying was true, neither of them had agreed with the “punishment” their mother and the other tribes were giving America. It went against what they were taught; the

Great Law of Peace. Their grandfathers had died to preserve that law, they shouldn't cast it aside now. But even with that, they shouldn't disobey their elders. They were only kids after all.

"I know."

Russia watched with intrigued eyes as the leader picked up Russia's knife and examined it. It was a good blade, with a nice sharp point and side. It'll work. "We must do what we have to."

Then he marched over to Russia.

As he always did, America was running form his problems. This time, in a more literal sense.

His pounding footsteps echoed in the cavern walls, faint voices echoing behind him. Was it smart to run through a cave? Probably not. Was it smart to run through it when you've never been in it and there are people chasing you? Well no, but desperate times call for desperate and unplanned measures, right?

America spotted a small slim corridor that was almost filled completely black with shadows. He would have run past it if he hasn't noticed it. He slowed to a stop and quickly struggled to fit in the small gap. He was desperately trying to hide his white costume, hoping that the shadows would dim it and give him a chance to hide.

He had only ran because of what that group had started talking about. Trying to catch his breath to silence himself, he thought back to when he was by the fire. After the woman said they were the ones who gave him his eyes, he instantaneously wanted to run and hide. Instead, he forced himself to stay seated, knowing that running would only make things worse for him.

Knowledge that obviously didn't stop him.

America covered his mouth with his hands when he heard the voices coming closer, their footsteps mimicking a stampede. He prayed to whatever god was out there that they ran past him, that

they wouldn't hear him. That he could get the hell out of these caves and get home.

The figures cloaked in black ran past, yelling in multiple languages a warning. This was the first time he could hear them clearly, so he immediately recognized the language and knew what they were saying. Hearing those words sent chills down his spine as with every word he remembered back to each of his episodes where he spoke that specific language. He cried out for help in that tongue. They were crying out a warning.

They yelled to be careful, that he was loose. The dangerous man was on the run.

Why was he the dangerous one? They were chasing him!

America as silently as possible breathed out a sigh of relief. He decided to wait there for a while and clear his head. Get his thoughts in order and try not to die from panic. Can he do that? Die from too much anxiety? He could just picture it now, his head suddenly exploding.

He actually got worried about that. Best to just not think about it.

He couldn't. Not with what had just happened.

As he sat there, feeling as if he was on trial for some horrible crime, the ones that encircled him told his story. Their story, and how they were the same thing. The woman spoke the most, clearly leading the group and keeping them all in line.

"You were young, an infant when you were brought to us." The woman had said, using a stick to prod at the fire that separated the two. "Your father, he did little to care for you."

America frowned and turned his head, trying not to remember. He moved past it, he has a good standing with his dad. He didn't want any bad memories stirring up old problems.

"We taught you everything you needed to know." A different

woman said, playing with her hands. Her voice sounded weak, sickly, on the verge of tears. But what he saw of her face shown no emotion, no sign in her body language either, other than her hands.

It was like that with everyone else in the room. Stone cold, relaxed postures. Impossible to tell how this was going to lead to. Range from freedom, to death.

“You were a difficult child, but it takes a village to raise a kid. Especially one who rebelled a lot,” America could swear he heard a tease in her voice. Almost as if she was telling a joke. Even if she had, the seriousness quickly returned. “That’s exactly what we did.”

“Wait, wait, wait, wait,” he interrupted them. It may have been a dangerous thing to do, but if he was going to die, he wanted to die with answers. “You raised me? Uh, no. I was on my own. My dad popped up but left me alone for years. I don’t remember being in any cult.”

“I told you this wouldn’t work, he’s the same as he’s always been.” A man landed close to the head-woman and whispered to her. America heard him clearly, unsure if that was the man’s intentions. “He’ll never listen.”

Nothing about these people felt familiar! He refused to believe it did, even if they were yet the only ones who spoke in the languages he did when he had his episodes. It had to be some crazy coincidence or something, nothing more. These freaks were just some weird creepy people who kidnapped him.

“That never stopped us, did it?”

The man went quiet and went back to his spot.

“What is your earliest memory?”

America looked down in the fire, with little trouble of finding the answer to the question. He had replayed that moment in his head to an unhealthy amount. The night his dad had left him, he was alone in the dark for the longest time. It was cold, a strange place he had

never been before, woods as far as the eye could see. There was no sign of any living person anywhere, so he stayed put. He hoped he'd see his dad come back, light in hand and take him home. He was too young to be on his own, he surely couldn't have thought that he'd survive out here. Could he?

He's never felt that scared before, and as a child, he cried late into the night. He cried for his rescue, for his father, for anyone to save him.

That's when the memory got fuzzy. He couldn't exactly remember what made him get up and survive on his own, but he did it nonetheless. It was one of the hardest things to do, a cruel thing at that to be done to a child, but it was that or die. And he wouldn't die that easily.

"I was left alone to fend for myself, no big deal." America sniffled and kept his eyes down. "What's in it to you, anyways? You still haven't told me why I'm here. Or what this is all about!"

Despite his yelling, no one reacted to it. Simply, the woman continued even if her voice dared him to yell at her again, "You were very young, we almost didn't believe it when we found you. Sitting alone, whimpering and shivering in the same spot for days. You must have been too scared to move, you were crying but your tears were long dried."

America, for once, went silent.

"We took you in, teaching you how to survive on this land. How to take only what you need, and give thanks for it in return," she paused and feed the fire. Another person grabbed something he couldn't see and tossed it into the fire as well. "You were a sweet kid, full of wonder. But your heart broke every time your father came and left you. We all knew you wanted him to take you back, but he couldn't see it."

"I don't want to talk about that." America clenched his fists, his hands shaking from the effort. He was doing all that he could to stay calm and keep from having a breakdown. He had taken care of

all this stuff, buried it under the rug and moved on. He didn't need it brought back out.

"You must." The woman insisted. "You hide and forget. Why do you think so much of your history is uncertain? You remember what you wanted to, everything else that reminded you of the bad was shoved down as well."

"Which is why you forgot us." A figure who hadn't spoken mumbled under their breath. No one told him to be quiet.

A heavy weight pushed harder on America and he slumped over. He scanned his memories, trying his best to remember anything that could give him a clue to what they were talking about. He couldn't, which made him realize something. There were many holes in his memory that he covered over, and no one questioned him about it. Maybe these people were. . . right?

He hadn't realized the woman had continued talking until he heard her say, ". . . you had your civil disputes before, but this when we saw things worsen. You broke."

"Wait, what?" America snapped his head back up, wishing he hadn't gotten lost in thought. His anxiety had risen again, to a level where he started rapidly tapping his finger on his thigh. As he struggled to pay attention, his mind was racing with so many thoughts. He knew he defiantly had holes in a lot of his memories, certain things he felt had been different. How had he, a small child, managed to survive all of his own? His father had been neglectful, to put it simply, but he had enough sense to know that he wouldn't survive. . . Was there someone who helped him?

"Right, you called it something else. A civil war?"

He froze. In a small weak voice, barely a whisper, he asked, "what did you say?"

"A civil war. It tore you apart, that trauma must have blurred your memory."

Then he ran.

He didn't remember getting up, it went by all too fast. He ran as fast as his legs could carry him, desperately trying to remember the path he took to get here. He was confident in the first few turns he made, but after that, it was a coin flip in his head. At first, he didn't hear anyone chasing after him, he had stunned them by getting up as quickly as he did until he allowed himself to stop and breathe.

They were close.

He ran until he found that hiding spot, safely trying to catch his breath now. His head started to hurt as small moments came back into memory. Of course, he remembered the civil war, how could he not? No matter how hard he tried to forget, he just couldn't. And that only proved their point even more.

Knowing he'd break down if he stayed with his thoughts, he began to pull himself free of the small gap. He needed to get the hell out of here and forget this whole thing even happened. But first, he needed to hurry and find Russia. As soon as he could figure out where the hell he was.

The kids stood around Russia, Three Feathers letting the knife in his hand fall to the floor. He couldn't believe what he had just done. He had never done anything like it before, and it terrified him. What was going to happen now? What would his mother do when they found out what they did to this country?

Russia rubbed his wrists, the rope burns stinging from his touch. The kid had cut him loose.

"Zank you." He stood up, easily towering over all the kids.

For a moment, he looked scary in his full height. Taller than anyone they knew, bigger in build, he could hurt them. Regret slowly crept up Three Feather's back and he quickly picked up the knife, holding it in front of them. Sensing the panic, the other eldest, One Feather, pulled out a smaller and duller, but still sharp, knife. He and Three

Feathers stood in front of the others, putting some distance between them.

Russia immediately backed away, to prevent scaring the kids even more. He'd rather not get stabbed, he knew he sharpened that knife just earlier that day. He assumed it was still the night of Halloween, at least. Even if it felt like an entire month or two had gone by.

"Im not trrrying to skarrre you." He reassured them, sitting back down. "See, I just needed to strrretch out my back."

Now almost equal height, the two lowered their weapons. They still held them just in case.

"Kan I valk arrround little bit?"

A moment later, the two nodded.

He slowly rose to his feet, careful not to make any sudden movements to scare them until he was standing up straight. He cracked his back and gave out a sigh of relief. Weary eyed, the kids watched him as he started walking around the cave. He glanced at the exit and fought against his internal instincts to make a break for it. He had to buy his time, he still didn't know how to find his way out. It'll be foolish to just run and hope for the best. He needed to somehow get these kids to help him.

He remembered when the kids had the closest thing to a fight he has yet to see. The youngest, he said what they were doing was wrong. The "they" must have been the adults they had mentioned before. Including their mother. Whatever it was they were doing they didn't like, he didn't know. Neither did it matter. Maybe he can use that to his advantage.

"What did you mean by 'what zey verrre doing vas wrrrong'?" He asked, testing the waters.

The kids all shared a look, mentally communicating to see if they should go further. They had already disobeyed so much, letting him go, answering his questions, and just being there with him! Their

punishments would be much worse if they do anything else.

“Our mom, she’s-“

“Shhh!”

One of the middle-aged kids, one with two feathers up and one down, looked at the one who had just shut him up with a glare. Clearly agitated he was silenced, he still kept his mouth shut and didn’t say what he wanted to.

Clearly, these kids were scared. The two eldest looked as nervous as the others, and as an older brother, he knew it was bad if the oldest were scared. Russia looked around to make sure there was no one else in the room before squatting down. Cupping a hand over his mouth, he whispered, “You kan tell me if you vant. I von't let anyone know you said it.”

One Feather looked at Three Feathers and seen the look of uncertainty on his face. He wasn’t going to say anything, his brother was too fearful of disobeying. But he wasn’t.

“Our mother.” One Feather whispered back to Russia, stepping closer. He ignored the wide-eyed look of horror from his sibling and continued. “She gave Hanödaga:nyas his ideas on his government. She felt as if she was responsible and she needed to fix it.”

Russia nodded patiently.

“We don’t like what they are doing to him. It goes against what we were taught. Even if someone was hurting us, we must be nice to them and help them see their bad ways. That was our instructions.”

“Instrrructions?” Russia didn’t mean to interrupt, but the usage of the word confused him.

One Feather nodded. “The Creator. He sent a messenger to remind us of The Great Law of Peace.”

Now knowing that their discontent rested in cultural and religious

roots, he knew it would be easier to convince them to help him. He didn't need to understand everything, just the basic stuff. The "Law of Piece" was pretty straightforward. And if peace is what they wanted, he would have to choose his words correctly.

"I'm sorry you all have been ignorrred," he was slightly sincere, "but if you vant to do what you believe is best, don't let fearrr get in the vay. You have to face it, and konquer it."

The kids all looked at him with wide eyes, a look they regularly wore around him. What he was saying stirred up an ancient fire inside, one that has fueled their entire lineage for centuries. This man was right, and of course charismatic as leaders tend to be.

"I want to do something." The one with One feather down mumbled. Then he spoke in a louder voice, "we-we have to, we can't keep doing this."

Russia smiled at the boy, nodding his head. That worked faster then he thought it would have. It made him wonder how long they had wanted to stand up.

"What can we do? We're kids, they won't listen to us." Three Feathers argued back.

"Then we'll make them listen." One Feather put his knife away, knocking the one from the others hand. Then he went and grabbed Russia's hand. "They don't belong here, we're letting them go."

"But-"

"No, this isn't what we were taught. We cant fix the past, but we can fix our future. We have to at least try and do what is right."

Russia was shocked. They appeared so young, and for them to be speaking in such a mature way was almost surreal. He knew older countries that didn't speak or think in such a way, and yet they were looked up to by a bunch of other countries.

"Vill you help me and Amerrrica get out of herrre?" He asked,

knowing the one with a single feather was already on his side. The youngest quickly nodded, and two middle children, One Feather Down and One Feather Up One Down said something that sounded like a yes. He hoped it was a yes, at least.

“We’re going to get in trouble.” Three Feathers cautioned the only one who hadn't agreed behind him with worried eyes.

“So?” One Feather pulled Russia towards the entrance. His hurriedness to disobey was entertaining and quite relieving. He was begging to warm up to these kids more than he thought he would. Especially since they have a rebellious spirit deep inside them.

“We have a secret path that we take to get through the caves. You will have to crawl through.”

He nodded, allowing himself to be led through the darkness. If America didn’t fuck up, they should get out of here with little as trouble as they could.

But of course, America fucked up, why would Russia expect otherwise?

After a while of running around aimlessly, America was lucky to find his way back to a tunnel that looked familiar. By then he had a few close calls with the ones hunting him down and a few other non-cloaked people. He didn’t see their faces, only noticed their backs as they walked away from him caught up in conversation. He noticed their clothing choices and was fearful of how familiar it looked.

Once he found his way back to the cave he had originally been tied up in, he seen that Russia was gone. A part of him had hoped he’d be here like a damsel in distress and he could prove he wasn’t some dumb foreigner. Prove to his Ruski that he was a very capable country.

Of course, anything that could work against him was trying very hard to.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck…” America’s mouth tasted foul with each word as if the panic behind them manifested into a taste. When people do they can taste fear, boy they must hate it because it is gross!

There was no trace of him except the cut rope that was strewn loosely around the pole. The fire had dimmed significantly, small little flames dancing. Even in that, there was a slight silver glint in the dimmed cave.

America walked over to it, quickly noticing it was the knife Russia had with him. He wouldn’t leave this, not with how defensive he had gotten with it before. Unless someone forced it out of his hand. Shit. Did those people get to him? Were they hurting him right now? Did they do something to him because he ran?

Hastily, America grabbed the knife, along with the blindfold next to it. It could be useful for something, he thought to himself. Then he turned on his heels and ran right back into the tunnels. He had to find Russia before they did anything else to him. He couldn’t let him get hurt because he was kidnapped. Despite what he told himself, he had a deep-rooted feeling that this was all his fault. True or not, he couldn’t focus on that right now. He had to find some sign of Russia.

He almost ran past it, the cloth blended into the cave walls. In a quick head swivel, he had scanned over the torn fabric right next to a small tunnel lowered to the ground. Processing what he had seen, he skidded to a stop and quickly turned back around. There, suspended on a jagged corner of the manmade tunnel was a brown thick cloth hanging up like a marker.

That was a piece of Russias sweater, he knew it.

America grabbed it, making sure not to leave it as a way for the others to find it. It was times like these where he was actually smart. Wither it mattered then was a different story. America had failed to know that these tribes were known for tracking, as the others were as well. If he was on the trail, it was guaranteed that the others were, too. If they weren’t already ahead, that is.

The tunnel itself was more fitted for a kid. The image of Russia being in here was comical, he must have had army crawled across because America could only lift himself up slightly. The rocks on the bottom where smoothened out which made that at least a little more comfortable, as long as he didn't hit his head on the top.

He froze when he heard approaching footsteps, holding his breath in his throat. Cautiously, he held the knife in front of him, parallel to his arm for defense if it was needed. The people walked right past him, not even hesitating to look inside America's hiding spot. He still laid there, muscles tensed as he waited for them to turn around, grab him and beat him until he was knocked unconscious again. When he heard the tapping footsteps leave, he let out a sigh of relief.

Now slightly paranoid, he held out the knife in front of him to see how reflective it was. Almost shiny as a mirror. What does Russia do all day, sit down and polish and sharpen his knives? Actually, he just might do that. Thank god he did, he could easily use the reflection to look around the entrance of the small tunnel to make sure those people were gone and there was no one else coming.

He swiveled it around and saw that the cavern was empty. Dim lights from the fire bounced along the walls, probably from those torches that were hung on the stone. He never really noticed they were there until then, and then he realized why he hadn't. How else had he been running around these caves and not fall and die?

About to crawl out of the tunnel, he turned the knife's side to himself and caught a glimpse of his reflection. He gasped slightly when his dreaded black eyes faced him again. He blinked a few times, adjusting the dim orange light reflection over his face to see if it was just the dark, or if those were his eyes. Sadly, he realized, they were. Whatever he had seen in that mirror was gone. His normal eyes were ripped from him, and now he was stuck with the ones he hated.

Maybe the mirror was just a trick they used to get him to follow them. Whatever it was, he was happy he grabbed that blindfold.

Now he could at least hide his eyes. Or blindfold Russia, whatever to hide them again.

Similar to America, Russia almost got caught. The kids had done a good job of navigating the caves and avoid the adults, except when having to push Russia's large body through an escape tunnel made for kids. His sweater ripped and he had got cut on his shoulder, but to him it was nothing. Just a flesh wound.

But once again he had to be shoved into a tight space, quickly out of the view of approaching tribes. He bit his tongue to keep from calling out or making any sounds of pain from the rough abrasions he'd surly have on both of his arms now.

He heard someone speak in another language, one of the kids answering him. He couldn't see their face, but their voice was deep and had a slight edge in it. He was talking about something bad, no doubt.

When he left and the kids pulled him out of his hurried hiding spot, he asked what they had just talked about.

"America got loose." Two Up One Down said, looking around them. One Feather ran ahead and stopped at the end of the corridor, scanning the area. "They told us to be careful and to tell them if we see anything."

"Ve have to find him." Russia looked down at the kids. They were so small compared to him, he had to crank his neck all the way down to look at them. Small and unsuspecting, they were his best bet of finding America and getting out of here.

The kids also liked how he looked like a wolf, still wearing the tail and ears.

"These caves go on forever, stretching across miles of land," Three Feathers sounded panicked. "We'd never find him."

"Ve still have to trrry. He's my frrriend, and I know some people who vould kill me if anything happens to him."

“It's okay this way.” One Feather called back to them. He waved his hand in a motion that meant following him just as he turned to hurry down the path he chooses was safe. Everyone followed him, Russia careful not to accidentally step on one of the kids.

“We’ll help you find him, and get both of you out here,” One Feather looked up to Russia as they ran. “Not going to lie, I’ll be happy to be rid of him.”

“I vish I kould say the same,” Russia muttered under his breath.

A loud shout had startled America and he bolted down a random corridor. He didn’t know if it was someone on his tail or not, but he didn’t want to take that chance that it could be. He didn’t want to end up being turned into stew because he got caught. Why he thought he’d be turned into food, I don’t know, fear and panic does that to people.

He spotted a hiding place and quickly dove into it. His breath was rising and falling as fast as a blender blade spins when it's on, his heart matching the sound. All his muscles were tensed, and he held a white-knuckled death grip over the hilt of the knife. His only means of protection, and what he saw as a reminder that he needed to find Russia faster than what little progress he’s been making so far. He had managed to find somewhat of a path he could have taken, but he was no tracker. He couldn’t tell which way he had gone after he came to his third fork in the road.

Everything since then had been pure guesswork.

In an effort to calm down his heart before he passed out, he stumbled out of the hiding spot and tried to sit down. When he did, his muscles told him they were sore, hurting and had multiple cuts on them. He hadn't noticed any before, but after the number of times he had dove between rocks, crawled on them or accidentally ran into walls, there was no doubt they’d be everywhere at this point. They stung his arms, his legs, his face. The blood must have added a few more lines to his already patterned faced. Well, vertical lines instead of his horizontal ones.

He shouldn't have sat down, a fact he quickly realized when he tried to stand up. His legs demanded a break, some rest and a lot of bandaids. Fuck, he wished he had endurance. America groaned in pain as he tried to lift himself up off the ground. He glanced down at the knife and tried harder, pushing his back against the wall for support and practically trying to jump up. Sweat dripped off his forehead, seeing into his clothes from overworking himself. Tired or not, he had to help Russia.

Help Russia, help Russia.

Help Russia, he needs your help.

"Help Russia, help Russia." He mumbled under his breath to get him to walk forward. He had to stay motivated, keep moving, but also try and steady his heart. He didn't need to die of a heart attack now, defiantly not in here with that satanic cult.

"Help Russia, help Russia."

He turned a corner and stumbled down it. The fire glowed brighter, turning the areas close to it almost pure white.

"Help Russia, help Russia."

He shut his eyes for a moment and counted to 7, breathing in. Holding it for 4, then breathing out for 8.

Breath in 7 seconds, hold for 4, let out of 8. Calm your heart, America.

"Help Russia, help Russia."

7, 4, 8. 7, 4, 8.

"Okay. . . I got to help Russia."

He steadied his breathing, feeling better and further away from collapse because of exhaustion. Not much further, but it was

enough to get him to keep moving. His legs ached, but it was ignorable as long as he didn't focus on them or stop or anything.

America stumbled around a corner and stopped. Standing in front of him were two women. They were talking to each other, carrying baskets of what looked like purple potatoes. He didn't have enough time to turn around and hide behind the wall, for they had noticed him before his impulses said to move.

For a second all three of them were frozen. One woman eyed the knife in his hand and quickly grabbed the other woman to keep her away. Cautiously they started hurrying backward.

"No, wait, I'm not going to hurt you!"

In retrospect, he shouldn't have yelled. He shouldn't have waved the knife around, either. The two women jumped at his threatening movements and ran back down the way they came, yelling in one of the many languages he had spoken in. His head hurt too much to tell completely which one it was but he knew the definition well enough.

"He's in here, hurry he's in here!"

Shit.

America bolted off in the opposite direction, checking his hand to make sure the knife was still there. He didn't want to use it on anybody, the thought of having another weapon in his hand coated in blood unsettled him. He didn't want to hurt anyone again, he didn't want to get into any more fights, or wars, or anything! He just wanted to escape, but he had to defend himself if he got caught.

Again the language was lost, but the meaning was there. A man's voice yelled behind him, "Stop!"

"No!" America yelled back, regretting doing so. Wasting breath on a shout made his head buzz and he tried to focus his eyes on the path ahead of him. Maybe if he found his way out of here, he could get

some help. If he had help, he could find Russia for sure. No, he could do it himself. If Russia was here because of him, he needed to fix his mistake himself.

Whoever was behind him was fast.

They were quickly gaining in on him, and he was only slowing down. Up ahead was what looked like the beginning of a market place. Why underground, who cared. There was no one in sight, probably evacuated in the case that he was a danger to everyone. In a desperate attempt to do something, America grabbed a basket full of something and knocked it down behind him. The place was small, only a few stands and a few containers of stuff. All he cared to note as he grabbed things within reach and threw them all behind him. Pots broke, the clay pieces shattering everywhere. Stacks of polished spears were knocked to the ground, rolling around. Quivers for arrows, gone and over his shoulder.

Wait.

Market place, what the hell, no! This had to be the weapon's place!

America ran faster now realizing this too late. He hoped that instead, it was a place to build your own weapons, kind of thing. Like a deadly version of Build-A-Bear.

He waited for a sheering pain to shoot in his leg, in his arm, or even his head. He waited for an arrow to go right past his head, or for a spear. He had led the man right into a target zone, only he was the target.

Sparing a glance behind, America looked to see if that is what was happening. The man had tripped over one of the baskets he had thrown down, his foot suspended in the air. Even though he was on the ground, he was getting up fast. Nonetheless, America smiled proud of himself and continued to run down a corner.

He smacked his head onto something hard and fell back down onto his back. His head pounded, what was once a mere hammer got an upgrade into a ferocious power saw. The room spun and half of him

expected he had run into another wall. Or worse, one of the hooded freaks who had kidnapped him.

“Amerrrica!”

His vision was dizzy and his eyes were squinted from the pain. Through a hazy darkened vision, he was able to distinguish a looming figure over him. Oh no.

Quickly he swung the knife, hoping to get away. The figure recoiled, gasping in pain and holding its arm. Something knocked the knife from his hand, and he barely heard the clatter on the ground. Tiny things with multiple appendages grabbed his wrists and held him down. A weight was placed on his chest, doing nothing good for his stomach and how it felt.

“No, no, no! Let me go, let me go!”

“Amerrrica! Kalm down you little shit!”

America stopped thrashing.

“Russia?”

He didn’t open his eyes to see if it was him, he already knew. In a flurry of movement, Russia hadn't gotten a good look at America. He had run into him in a flash and had fallen to the ground, not enough time to fully get a good look at his eyes. America didn’t know this but hoped that was the case. So he kept his eyes shut, and head tilted away.

“Here.” One Up One Down handed him his knife, his own blood dripping from the edge. Russia grabbed it and put it back in his holster. He knew he’d somehow get it back, he always did. He just didn’t expect to get stabbed as well.

“Hide them!” Three Feathers hissed in an urgent whisper, his brothers letting go of America. They pushed him up off the ground and into Russia. The kids heard one of the elder’s feet running, too, and quickly pushed the two into a different hallway. Trying to get

ahold of his surroundings, America tried to see how many kids there were, thankfully counting only three. Why Russia was with a few kids, he didn't have enough time or energy to think about it.

Once they were out of view, Three Feathers shouted for help. America recognized the language, he knew it. . . At least he thought he did. This whole time it has been knowing something, feeling deep down like he knew it, right there on the tip of his tongue, but then it's being pushed down as well. Like something didn't want him to know. Despite all that, he knew the boy was calling out for help. That America was there.

"Russia, we have to run, he's getting-"

A hand was clamped over his mouth. His back was against Russia's chest and his huge hands on his shoulder and over his mouth kept him in place and quiet.

"Shh, he's distrrracting zem."

"Hmfp ymhf kowf fhaf?"

"Shh!"

Having no choice, and since one of the kids had hit his leg, he kept quiet. He listened to the other kid he only caught a fleeting glimpse of, hearing him say that America had gone down the hall. Panic rose in his chest as he waited for the man and the kid to turn the corner their way and jump them. Instead, he heard their running footsteps head in the other direction, away from them.

"Come on, the entrance to the cave is close." The second kid waved them down. America, getting a closer look at him recognized the headdress they wore. He remembered wearing something similar sometime in the past, but those he recognized only as something he should know. The names once again escaped him, as infuriating as it was, but he knew he knew it. He had written it down.

His book.

Interrupting his thoughts Russia picked him up and threw him over his shoulder. Making haste, Russia followed the two remaining kids, ignoring the pain in his arm. It was just deep enough to bleed, but not deep enough to be too much of a worry. What made it painful was the fact that the cut was over a sore spot from hitting the walls. Perfect fucking aim, America.

They slowed to a stop just before a bend, and one of the kids peaked down the hall. Sure enough, there were two men searching for America. Used now to the extra rush of adrenaline every time there was someone there that could possibly catch them, the kids jumped right to action. It had previously worked with the rest of the brothers, and with everyone so worried they'd hoped that diverted everyone's attention further into the caves. The opposite direction that Russia and America needed to go.

Russia held America still in the shadows, and he quickly knew to be quiet. Normally he would protest being draped around someone's shoulders like a child, but he was thankful for the break from running and the weight taken off of his feet. Plus, it feels nice being held by him. Even if it was in a less charming way. It still counts!

One Up and One Down ran around the corner and began his distraction to get the others away. The last one there to guide them out, One Feather quickly ran across the hallway and checked around the other corner. It was clear, and he waved for Russia to follow. They were almost out of there and he knew that the area upfront would be left alone. Everyone mostly stayed away from the entrance in case some nosy country wanted to explore it. He just hoped that they hadn't gotten far enough to guard the entrance, yet.

But hey, Murphy's Law right?

Just as they reached the last turn down to the cave entrance, they were suddenly stopped when two darkened figures could be seen by the entrance. Unfortunately, what appeared to be guards had heard their running footsteps and called out, "stop!"

Russia suddenly stopped running and practically dove behind a large rock structure. He had to lay down slightly to hide better. This

was the first time he had heard someone besides these kids speak in English. But it was a voice he didn't recognize and he knew he needed to hide immediately.

One Feather kept running.

"They need your help!" He cried in an other language. "They found him, but they need everyone's help! Please, you have to hurry!"

Russia and America could only hear but knew the boy didn't stop running because the two others had already heard footsteps. If they were able to distinguish how many there actually where it was unknown. But the entrance was right there! Even if they somehow knew where they were, Russia was confident he could run faster then them. He was taller then them, from the few glimpses he spared around the rock. Maybe by a few inches or more, but defiantly still taller. The only problem was, there were two of them. One on one, no problem. America was not going to be of any help, so two on one?

America dug around in his pants pocket, trying to be as discrete as possible. He had that blindfold, and he needed to get it on now before Russia gets a chance to face him.

One Feather came up with an on the spot quick urgent story, hopefully, to shake the guards up enough to leave their spots. He told the story of how America had managed to get cornered, but they need all the help they can get. Hearing a kid sound so panic and practically running to them for help was worrisome by itself. But knowing that a cornered lion would do anything to get free, it was frightening. America was like a lion to them.

One Feather quickly lead the way back into the caves. Russia quietly shifted more into the shadows, hiding the dull dirty white of America by pinning him up again the wall and covering him with his body. With such sudden movements, America could only recognize the feeling of being shoved against the wall. He had barely had enough time to tie the fabric around his face, so it was slightly loose but it covered his eyes just fine.

Oh hey! The fabric was see-through. Well, sort of.

America could kind of make out the shape of Russia's arms on either side of his head and the body of Russia in front fo him.

Wait….

"Okay, zey arrre gone, ve kan get out- why arrre you wearrring blindfold?"

"Uhh," America's voice was hoarse and his throat stung like sandpaper. He coughed as a response and Russia knew he shouldn't answer right now. He didn't know what he had gone through, and could only assume some form of beating with the number of cuts and bruises he had all over him.

"Kome on, ve'rrre almost zerrre." Russia held out his arm for America to hold onto to help support him up. They didn't need to run, there was no one else present to stop them. And if something bad were to be outside, Russia wanted to save his strength to fend it off.

"Are you okay?" America strained his throat to ask the question that he had wanted to since he found him again.

The dim light of what could only be guessed as a raising sun acted as a guiding light for them. Their own staircase to heaven, even. The landscape looked dark, so it was still very early in the morning. Trees and plants, brown and withered began to take shape as the moved closer.

"Im fine. You look like shit zough." Russia managed a chuckled for both of them. America nodded, knowing that this was not his best moments. Certainly not his worst, but close to it. He felt that his makeup was smeared beyond all recognition, cleared off on some parts of his face, dried blood splatters and drips from a few open cuts must have made him look worse then he actually was. His cheek felt swollen, and the inside of his lip had bled to leave an iron taste on his tongue.

When he opened his mouth to leave one of his signature comments, Russia shushed him.

“Nyet. Don’t speak, you’ll hurrrt yourrr thrrroat.”

He nodded instead and focused on walking. The cuts and bruises were nothing compared to the soreness he felt in his legs. He didn’t know how much he had been running, or how long. But it was long enough for his legs to feel like jelly and his lungs to be stabbed with spikes every time he inhaled sharply.

Russia wasn’t as accident-prone as America had been, in fact, it was like the cave had been helping him out more than it did America. He was thankful to finally breathe in the fresh air, one not tainted with must or humidity. It was cold, a refreshing cold that made America shiver but greeted Russia like a warm hug. On instinct, America moved closer to Russia for warmth, tucking himself under his arm and wrapping it around him.

They continued to walk, dragging their feet. The soles of them burned, begging, demanding for release. Russia had more willpower over pain then most countries did, so he ignored it and continued to walk. They needed to get far away from that cave, find someplace to rest and figure out what to do from there. Until then, they had no choice but to keep on walking.

Since Russia was focused on keeping his willpower in check, he wasn’t fully aware of his surroundings. Curiosity had crept into One Feather, seeing how he was the only one to make it that far with them and be able to get away from the older tribes. They had deemed it unsafe and had told him to hide while they had gone to get America, who they thought was still in the caves.

Naturally, for any young kid, he went against what he was told and followed America and Russia. He was an excellent tracker, so catching up was no problem. Making sure to stay out of earshot and downwind was a different thing, slightly harder. He stepped lightly, staying low to the ground. He wanted to know what these two were going to do now. More importantly, to him at least, where The Wolf was going to go. He didn’t want this to be the last he saw of him.

A half an hour or so later, with no sign of a group of warriors hot on their tail, Russia stopped walking. He looked around, trying to find an ideal place to sit. There, between two trees was a divot of some kind, big enough for them to sit down at and have the low hanging pine needles act as some sort of cover in case it rained. The number of clouds in the sky suggested it would.

“You stay herrre,” Russia instructed as he set America down on the spot. He let him go and moved to sit comfortably in it. “I’ll see if I kan find something to clean yourrr kuts with.”

America smiled and nodded, knowing he wouldn’t take a response.

He involuntarily shivered.

Russia frowned, looked down at his thick sweater and decided it would suit him better. After all, America had thin clothes under his costume that was no good for early morning temperatures. He’s dealt with worse.

“Herrre.” Russia took off his sweater and handed it to America. “Zis should keep you varrrm forrr rright now.”

He nodded once more and quickly put it on.

Russia left America there, looking for some source of water. Maybe the leaves had gathered the morning dew? He had thought he heard a stream running somewhere to his right. Maybe he can get some water from there.

There was a thin stream, almost unnoticeable. Russia unhooked his fake tail and dipped it into the water, the fur quickly absorbing it. It would have to work for a sponge since this was the best he could do for now.

As he sat there at the stream's edge, he took a few deep breaths. It was calm still, almost unsettling after the rapid-fire of events that had happened. His heart had yet to register he was safe, beating faster than a normal resting one. Not only that, he was hungry.

His stomach grumbled.

Russia looked around for something edible. Unfortunately, this was summer. Not a lot of things grow during these months. They die. Despite that, he noticed red berries on a tall thin bush-like tree. Very noticeable, it looked to be pretty well held up despite the time of year. He could really use those berries right about now.

Hunger overpowering rational thought, Russia stood and walked over to those berries. He plucked one from its place and looked it over. It didn't look very poisonous, and there are plenty of red berries that were good. What could one berry do?

"Don't eat that!"

Russia froze, his hand just about to toss the berry in his mouth.

Popping up from behind a bush, there was the familiar figure of One Feather. He ran over to him, jumping off a rock and slapping the berry from his hand.

Stunned, Russia stumbled back. “What arrre you doing herrre, arrre you following us?”

“Technically? Yes.” One Feather kicked the berry with the tip of his shoe, watching it roll into the stream and get carried away. “You seem lost. And I know the way to where you all live.”

“Wherrre?”

One Feather pointed and Russia nodded his head. They have to start heading west from where they where.

“After an hour or more, you should find the trail you came in on.” He explained, turning to dig in his pocket. Russia watched curiously as he pulled out half a sandwich. It had big, lumpy looking bread with some maroon type of filling between the bread. He did recognize the beans mixed in with the rest of the substance.

“It's not much,” the boy admitted. “But you need this more than I.”

Russia happily took it, waiting to eat it. America was probably hungry, too. He’s always hungry, anyways.

“Zank you.” Russia smiled, looking up from the sandwich down to the little boy. “What is yourrr name?”

“Russia!” America called from where he was left. Waiting there, it seemed like forever and he had started worrying something had happened to him.

The boy backed away upon hearing America’s voice. Of course, he was happy he was out of the caves, a place America didn’t belong in. But hearing him still sent shivers down his spine. It reminded him too much about what had happened to his grandfather.

“I have to get back home.” He jumped back over the stream but stopped when Russia called for him to wait.

“Thank you for helping us. I know Amerrrica must have done something, but-“

“It's past.” He interrupted him. “Not everyone will forgive and forget, and I can't say I’m any different,” he sighed, clearly what had happened was a heavy topic. After a moment, he continued in a more determined voice. “Instead, we should remember and recover. This could help us do that.”

Russia was silent. He didn’t know how to respond to such a young child speaking like this. It was such a mature way of thinking, as well. Although, age was different for countries. Those that have been around for centuries could be seen as younger, while ones who have been around for a few decades quickly grow up to be mature countries. He knew he was one of those countries, growing up fast after the death of his father. This little boy, who knew how long he had been around.

“I’ll see you in time, Wolf.” Then he ran off, quickly disappearing into the trees. Russia watched him, to make sure he didn’t stop to

follow them again. How long he had done that for was unknown to him. Right now, all he needed to do was help America get cleaned up, share some weird food, and get the hell out of there.

America stood up and had started to look around. Russia must have walked off somewhere out of earshot. That was the only reason he let himself think of, or else he would start panicking again.

"Amerrrica, i told you to stay seated."

He quickly pulled the blindfold back down over his eyes and spun around. With the light from the early morning, he could see through the fabric well enough to see the figure of Russia walking to him. He smiled weakly, hoping Russia couldn't see through the fabric.

"Sorry man, I got bored."

Russia shook his head, not even bothering to ask why he was wearing the blindfold. "Sit down I got to clean yourrr vounds."

"Dude I'm fine, it's just a few scrapes."

"Not one on yourrr head. Sit down."

Too tired to put up too much of a fight, America just sat down where he stood. Russia sat down in front of him and began to wipe away the blood, along with the paint. It made him look silly, more than it did before they got kidnapped. His wig was gone as well, lost to the world.

The gash wasn't too serious, but he wanted to make sure.

"I know vay back to paths," Russia told him to fill the silence. "Ve'll be home soon."

"How do you know?"

"I just do."

America nodded, going along again. The thought of his bed was so soothing to him, he felt like he could pass out from just thinking about it. But he knew he couldn’t. He can't just leave Russia alone to handle everything.

His fake tail now covered in water, blood and paint was tossed to the side. He ripped the sandwich in half and told America, ”Eat zis.”

“I swear to God, if it's your-“

“Shut up and eat it.” Russia cut him off, placing the food in his hand.

America, realizing he was starving, quickly shoved it in his mouth and downed the whole thing. The bread was slightly dry, a little hard and he recognized the taste of beans. Whatever it was it was weird and familiar at the same time.

“How arrre you feeling?”

America whipped his mouth free of crumbs. “Better. Kind of thirsty, but when we get home I can get a drink. Thanks.”

Russia nodded and moved to sit beside him. He had savored his food, instead of wolfing it down as America had. He looked at the one beside him and felt relieved to know he was okay. He had no idea what had happened to him, why he looked so beat up, or how he even got away. All of that didn’t matter at the moment, he was safe.

All they needed to do was get home.

And they better hurry. Countries must be worried.

“Kan you stand?”

America nodded, standing back up to prove it. He still wore his brown sweater, looking baggy and big on him. His hands barely even poked out of the sleeves and the bottom went well below his waist. The cloth had a tear in it, but it was warm enough for him.

And something about seeing America in his sweater made Russia smile.

“Kan you see in zat vell enough to valk on yourrr own?” He asked, standing up.

America looked around, being able to see fine and wanting to make sure it was decent. “Uhh, not really,” he lied. “Can I hold onto your arm to balance myself?”

Russia nodded, holding out his arm. Smiling, America quickly wrapped his arms around Russia’s, grabbing his hand with one of his. “For warmth, my hands are freezing,” he claimed.

Russia didn’t care too much.  It felt reassuring, actually.

“Kome on, let's go home zen.”

**(Who's the idiot who took forever to write this? Me!!! But hey its like 10,374 words so it's fine. Probably. I dunno, but thanks for waiting. The next one will defiantly be shorter and I'm aiming for it to be uploaded on the 26th. But you’ve seen how I am with schedules (ps I suck) so I have no idea how that’s going to work out.**

**So whooooooooooooooooooooooooo!)**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Christmas

**Narrator's POV**

Merry fucking Christmas America.

That's all he could think of as he vomited in his bathroom. It was the same as his other episodes, except since what had happened in the woods, they have been more frequent. They had originally happened every other few weeks, sometimes even with a month or two between his episodes if he was lucky.

Now this was his second one today. Or what he considered today, at least, since an episode had happened around midnight that night then this one now.

Not even bothering to cry out for help or speak in general, America struggled to wait it out. He didn't know what else to do during this anymore. His family was downstairs doing Christmas stuff and he was locked away in his room feeling everything but jolly. He had spent that morning causing as little chaos as possible, just for the Christmas spirit. Plus he loved Christmas. The snow, the decorations, the songs, the food, and most importantly the presents!

Personally, his favorite is the gift part.

Oh and the whole joy to the world and family stuff.

Weakened, he collapsed onto the floor and tried to steady his panicked breathing. After a few minutes, he managed to move and curled up into a small ball. Like some cruel joke, in his pain all he heard was Christmas music playing downstairs. His family laughed, his mother's voice louder than the others. Such a cherry sound, with magic in the air, turned sour and cold when it reached his ears.

As he struggled to lift himself up, he heard a slight nocking on his bedroom door.

“Ame? Are you okay? You kind of left without saying anything.”

It was Canada.

He dragged himself to the wall and sat up, pressing his back against it. If he could, he would have grabbed his glasses and covered up the fact he was having yet another episode. The last thing he wanted was to stir up more trouble and worry, especially on Christmas. He didn’t want to taint the holiday with his problems. Unfortunately, his arms and legs wouldn’t comply with that want, instead they remained weak and useless.

Canada slowly opened the door, a small wrapped box in hand. He had made a special gift for everyone in his family, he gave his mom a very specially made fur coat (which no animals were killed for), his father a glass jar of maple syrup to flavor his tea, Australia a new leather journal so he could record his findings, and New Zealand a camera that could take high quality photos of the night sky. And for America, he got him a small key chain that had an utility knife. But America was not present to receive his.

"America?" Canada asked once more stepping fully into his brother's room. It was slightly messy, as it always is, but with no immediate sign of him.

Then he noticed the bathroom door open, America pressed against the wall with his eyes closed. That familiar sight, along with his glasses discarded on the floor and splotches of that black stuff dripped everywhere, told Canada all he needed to know.

Quickly, Canada ran to America and set the box down on the ground. "Oh, America," he cried grabbing him into a hug, "I'm sorry i didn't know you were going through another one!"

America loosely held his brother in a hug, trying not to speak. He'd rather not strain his throat more than he already has.

"They've been getting worse, especially after you and Russia got lost in the woods." Canada rubbed his brothers back and held him like a child. America felt a twinge of guilt as he was reminded of his lie.

"Lost in the woods." That's what he convinced everyone to believe. Nothing had happened, there was no kidnapping, nothing like that. He and Russia had wanted to scare the others but got lost in the dark woods. Then they found their way back in the morning, after taking shelter away from wild animals. It had worked enough, well enough for others to drop it, but Russia went silent after that.

Oh, Russia. America felt even more guilty. When they had a moment alone, Russia asked him why he lied. Why he wasn't telling anyone he just got kidnapped and tortured. Instead, he turned to him and said it didn't happen. That they had gotten lost in the woods and America fell down a steep elevated drop and got scuffed up. Nothing else had happened, no one else was there. Russia hadn't really talked to him since.

"America?"

He shook his head and looked up ay Canada who wore a worried frown.

"Hmm?" He hummed.

"Are you okay? This was the fifth one this week."

Sixth, America thought to himself.

"What's going on?"

He really should make sure Russia was okay. Especially with what was going to happen tomorrow. He hadn't checked upon him for a month. Completely cold turkey. Okay, well, not completely. They had made small conversations in school but Russia would always keep his answer short and cold. He was dodging conversation and he wasn't trying to hide it.

"America!"

"What?" He sputtered out like a dying car engine, his voice sickly and broken.

"What's going on? You space out for a while." Canada was still holding onto America, the added worry to his face made him look

like he aged another century in less than five seconds.

"I'm okay, I was just—" he paused and rubbed his eyes "—thinking. What-what-what, are what are you doing here?"

"Oh, I wanted to give you this." Canada grabbed the gift and handed it to him. America looked at it and smiled, trying his best to be enthusiastic. Canada could tell he was trying, even though it must have been hard to smile. It made him feel warm.

“Nice.” America half heartedly chuckled when he saw the utility knife. He knew it must have been because of the story he told and Canada wanted to make sure he was always prepared.

“I hope you’d like it.” Canada stood and helped America to his feet. He held onto his arm until he could regain some strength in his legs, allowing himself to be lead to his bed. He watched worryingly as America grabbed a pair of sunglasses off his nightstand and covered his eyes once more.

“We should go get dad and mom, tell them you had another episode.”

“No!”

Canada jumped from the sudden urgency.

“I mean.” America sighed and played with his hands. “I don’t want to bother everyone. Not today at least. Can we wait until tomorrow?”

He nodded slowly, understanding what he meant. Downstairs everyone was having fun. Hearing that America’s problem was getting worse would defeat lynx damped their parade. Maybe it could wait a day, if America really thought it could.

“You going to be okay here?” He rubbed the back of his neck, the small raccoon tail of his hat brushing against the back of his hand. “Australia wants to see snow and we always have it, but you don’t have to come if you don’t want to.”

America sat down and rubbed his knees, trying to soothe the

soreness. He glanced up on his dresser, cluttered with dozens of small objects and clothes he had yet to put away. There in the mess, was a small wrapped gift. He had gotten it wrapped a week prior to the holiday, hoping that by now things with Russia would have changed. They hadn't, and it made his heart ache.

“Yeah, I’ll go. I gotta be the first one to throw a snowball at his head, after all.” America joked standing up and going to grab his coat and gloves. Canada smiled at his brother and went to go get ready himself.

“I’ll meet you downstairs then, okay, Ame?”

“Gottcha’ bro.” He said, not bothering to look over his shoulder to talk to him. He grabbed what he needed, quickly putting the stuff on and clearing his dresser’s surface. Instead of putting everything away, however, he tossed everything onto the ground. All he had was the gift he had wanted to give to Russia. He had that for a few years, he knew Russia may like it.

He hesitated picking it up, however. Today was what it was meant for yes, but tomorrow.

Tomorrow, Russia might need it the most.

# Hello Dad

**((There is a slight trigger warning here, too, so please read with caution. Also, the accents were taken out to get it in on time, and cause I'm severely sleep deprived right now. When I wake up I'll add them it tho. ))**

**Russia's POV**

It had been a long time since I had seen America.

Why that thought popped in my head then, I didn't know or care for. I shook my head free of memories and stared at the stone in front of me. The sides were clean, well cared for. There was no sign of weathering to it, only the snow had gathered around it. When enough fell and piled onto the stone, I quickly brushed it off.

The cold wind bit at my open skin, a feeling I was always used to. I would normally be wearing my brown sweater, but America had it. It was okay, I was happy he had it.

I shook my head again, trying to free myself of America relate thoughts. But the harder I tried, the more they popped up.

How was he doing?

Is he okay?

Why did he lie?

Is his dad still mad at me?

After they had made it close to the path they had run into Canada. He was no longer in costume, a sign that it was past the night of Halloween by then. Everything was a blur, it had happened so fast. America's family had learned that he had gone missing with me and they came out here searching for him. It hadn't been long, maybe

around a day.

Canada had quickly taken America from my arms, holding him close and crying into his shoulders. In his sobs, I heard words such as; lost, prank, Phil was dead and then he wasn't, wendigo, a camera, a trail, and a dead end. Incoherent, I would later learn the full story from Vietnam. America went quickly into an explanation, one that was in no way true. He spun a web of lies about how we had gotten the idea to scare the group, just hide in the bushes and wait to jump out at them all. But then, in the darkness of trying to find a good hiding spot, we got turned around and lost. Something chased us, a weird animal thing (Canada quickly filled in something he called a Wendigo) and we got even more lost and America had fallen down a cliffside. We stayed in a cave for the night and tried to find our way home after the sun rose.

With how detailed he made his story, I thought that's what he was thinking about the entire time we were walking to the paths.

"How are you doing?" A hand was set on my arm.

I looked down to see Belarus next to me. She was bundled up, her breath clear in front of her. In her hand was a glass mug that had steam rising from it. She nudged it towards me, and I greatly took it. Even though I was feeling a little warm, an odd feeling since I wasn't bundled up and it was snowing all around me, the gesture was still nice.

We stood there in silence, looking down at the barren scene in front of us. The backyard that was filled with flowers of all kinds in the warmer months was now white and bare, the only thing seen was the tombstone in front of us.

Belarus sat down on the bench behind us, a stone matching the grave marker it faced.

"все внутри, почему бы тебе не присоединиться к нам? (Everyone is inside, why don't you join us?)"

I took a drink of the warm liquid, tasting the alcohol that was in it,

too. It didn’t have enough, so I took out my flask and poured some vodka into it.

“Россия, я волнуюсь. Вы знаете, что мы не можем оставить вас одних сегодня. (Russia, I'm worried. You know we can't leave you alone today.)” She tugged on my sweater sleeve. I didn’t acknowledge her, I just looked down at my drink. “Уже поздно, вы должны войти внутрь. Ешь что-нибудь, у тебя ничего не было с завтрака. (It's getting late, you should come inside. Eat something, you haven't had anything since breakfast.)”

Late? Since breakfast? I came outside a little while after that, had I been out here that long?

“Я пойду внутрь немного. (I’ll go inside in a bit.)” I quietly mumbled, holding my drink up close to my mouth. The steam rose off of it, warming my face all while making me feel like I was in a humid place.

It reminded me of the caves.

“хорошо. (Good.)” She said but didn’t stand up to leave.

I stood in place, looking down at the tombstone. A few specs of snow had gathered but didn’t cover the top, nor the base enough for me to clean it off. I had taken a bottle of vodka and place it on the base, a drink for him since we both needed one. Normally, from what I’ve seen at least, people would dump the drink onto the grave itself for the body underneath. But we weren't left a body.

I shook my head free of the memories I didn’t want. To keep them at bay, I chugged down the warm drink. Hopefully, the alcohol will hit me before my memories do.

After a while, I heard shivering behind me. I turned to see Belarus straighten herself out and pretended she hadn't been cold. It had gotten darker, what little light that could still be left was covered by the dark storm clouds. I knew a heavy storm was coming, but usually, I’d feel the cold before I saw it, and right now I felt warmer than I would usually.

Ignoring that, I asked Belarus, “почему бы тебе не зайти внутрь сейчас? Твой холод. (why don’t you go inside for now? Your cold.)”

“нет я не. (No, I’m not.)” She argued back, crossing her arms over her chest. “Кроме того, если бы я должен был войти внутрь, ты тоже должен был бы прийти. (Besides, if I was to go inside, you would have to come along, too.)”

I looked back at the tombstone and hesitated on the carved words. “Я пойду внутрь, просто дай мне еще десять минут. (I’ll go inside, just give me ten more minutes.)”

She must have heard the sadness in my voice because she swiftly got up and wrapped her arms around my waist in a tight hug. “Вы обещаете, что? (Do you promise?)”

I looked down, seeing her gloved hands. I loosely patted her arms at my sides and nodded my head. “я обещаю.  (I promise.)”

“Хорошо, потому что нам нужен наш тупой старший брат. (Good, cause we need our dumb big brother.)” She sniffled and playfully punched my arm. I smiled and spun around to face her, shoving her lightly.

“Заткнись, ты знаешь, я единственный, у кого мозги в этой семье. (Shut up, you know I’m the only one with brains in this family.)”

She laughed, a sound that lifted my spirits. I managed to keep up my smile long enough for her to turn away and walk back to the house. When she reached the back door, she turned around and waved to me. I returned the favor and watched her go back inside, the warm light quickly swallowing her image.

My frown returned then.

Tired from standing, I sat down on the bench, brushing aside the rest of the snow that had gathered. I set the empty cup next to me,

a mediocre companion compared to the company of anyone I had been with all day.

“Привет, пап. (Hey dad,)” I spoke quietly, scared that my voice would somehow cut through the peaceful scene and ruin it.

“Нам удалось не убивать друг друга, поэтому вы можете отметить еще один год для этого. (We managed not to kill each other, so you can mark another year down for that.)” I chuckled, trying to keep my own spirits up. Even with that, it didn’t work. It never seems to, huh? “мы скучаем по тебе. (We miss you.)”

A loud shrill of laughter came from the house and cut me off.

“ Я скучаю по тебе. (I miss you.)” I slumped forward and covered my face with my hands. The cold air bit at them sharply, the tips burning from the cold. Instinctively, I tried to bury them under the fur from the top of my hat. It did little to help them.

I had so much I wanted to say to him, so much to ask, so much to argue about, so much to do. Ever time I came out here, everything I’ve managed to shove down inside comes right back up and I can barely keep myself from crying. We were all so young when he left us, and I tried my best to stop it from happening. I tried to keep us together, I tried to keep him from breaking apart but it didn’t work.

He held my hand, and it almost felt like he wasn’t there. It was obvious long before this day that he was breaking. I would see him in pain, for small moments, before he quickly covered it up. Small cracks started appearing, and he would always hide them. At first, they didn’t seem too serious. He would always wave off my worry and seeing him dismiss it so quickly, I thought it was fine.

How foolish was i?

“Russia!!!!”

I turned around to see Belarus standing in the doorway again. Seeing her reminded me that I promised I would be inside in ten minutes. My time must have been up, and she was here to remind

me.

I stood up ready to go back inside, but she added something and it made me pause.

“America is here!”

America?

I looked back to the headstone and sat back down. “Tell him to go away!”

I took what was left in my flask and downed it all. Why the hell would America come here? Especially today, he knew what today was. He hated my dad, and he hated him. Why the hell would he fucking bother? I've been shoving him away for a reason.

In my moment of anger, I didn’t hear the footsteps behind me.

“Hey, Ruski?”

I whipped my head around and shot daggers with my eyes. America jumped away, fumbling with the box in his hands. It was a present, one probably meant for me. I didn’t care, I just wanted to be left alone.

Without a word, I turned and had my back faced to him once more.

“Still mad?”

I grunted as a response.

My eyes were narrowed, trained on the grave in front of me. I listened intently, however, to the country behind me. He stayed in place for a few seconds, then slowly shuffled his way over to me. Even if he wanted to be quiet, the packed snow crunched under his boots and did little to help him.

“I’m sorry if I hurt you, I just wanted to give this to you.”

He set the box down next to me, pushing my mug to the side. I glanced at it and looked back to the headstone. Really? Classic America trying to fix a problem with materialistic things. Nothing ever changes with him.

“And, I just.” He sighed and I heard him kick the snow. “I wanted to make sure you were okay.”

I turned my head to look at him. He was standing there, closed into himself and rubbing his arm nervously. He was bundled up, his jacket making a sound as it was rubbed up against himself, and the only exposed skin was his mouth and eyes. As much as his eyes can be exposed, his signature sunglasses were covering them. I always found it amusing how much he covered himself up during the cold. Meanwhile, here I was in a sweater. No gloves, or scarf. Just my ushanka.

“I’m fine. Now leave.”

“No.”

I blinked. He certainly has kept his boldness, now hasn’t he?

“Why not?” I growled, turning away from him.

“Because.” He nudged the present towards me. “I want you to open this.”

“Will you leave?”

After a moment, he quickly said, “if you want me to, yes.”

Satisfied, I took the present and set it in my lap. In a rush to get rid of him, I quickly tore open the gift and practically ripped apart the box. Once I had it open though, I paused.

“Your father gave that to me.”

I almost didn’t hear him. I slowly reached into the box and pulled out America’s gift for me. It was a leather-bound journal, stamped

onto the cover was my father's symbol of the hammer and sickle. The edges of the book were faded, pulled tight with each hand stitch that held the leather in its place.

"What is this?"

America's voice came out slowly, distorted as if he was underwater. "Your father's journal."

With shaking hands, I undid the leather strap. It had resistance to it, stiff when I pulled it. It had been held in place for a long time. The spine cracked as it opened, the paper whiter than the yellowed sides of it. As soon as I did open it, a rush of an old smell hit my nose, mixed in with the smell of the leather and vodka. Written in Russian, I recognized my dad's handwriting. I traced my hand over the paper, feeling every fiber and the indents from the pressure of the pen. In some places, the ink was slightly smudged in the direction of my father's hand moving across the page as he wrote.

Quickly I scanned the entire page, moving onto the next, the next, and the next until I reached the last written page. In what used to be clam formal writing was turned frantic, messy and rushed. I stopped on this page long enough to read it.

I know my time is coming to an end, as everything must. My only worry is not of my legacy, my power, or my history. It's of my children.

They have all left, drifted apart. Away from me and my home. After all these years, I have done little to earn the right to keep them with me. To call them mine.

The only one who hasn't lost his faith in me is Russia. I see him every day, trying to keep everyone together and to keep us all smiling. The poor boy refuses to see the truth, ignoring what I now know was wrong. Perhaps I let myself fall under the same illusion he kept himself under. Now I have learned reality, unfortunately too late.

I don't know for certain what will happen, but I can hope that my

boy will be okay after I am gone. But hope does little for us now, doesn't it? I have made a plan to give this journal to my former enemy, America, to hold onto until Russia needs it. I hope he learns from my mistakes, from how I lived and is able to be better.

And if everything did manage out as I plan, my son, you should be reading this. If you are, I want you to know something.

I love you.

-Your father, USSR
My vision blurred and my breath was caught in my throat as I felt tears going down my cheeks. I held my hand over my mouth as I reread those short paragraphs again, and once more.

"Russia, you okay?" I heard my father's voice ask. I looked up with wide eyes to see America sitting next to me. He wore a worried frown and his body was turned towards me, giving me full attention as he awaited my answer. Caught in my memories, I thought I heard my dad speak when it had been America who had done it.

I looked back down at the page in front of me, carefully shutting it to prevent my tears from damaging the page and ink. The cold stung my skin, fallowing the path of tears. The feeling of that was sharper than any blade I could have ever felt.

Gently I set the book down into the box and stared at it.

"N-nyet." My voice turned into a croak as a sob was caught in my throat. For once, I spoke the truth. Acting as a floodgate, tears rushed from my eyes and I began to sob into my hands. I tried to stop myself from crying, trying to hold back the tears, my sobs but every time I tried, I cried out harder. The cold air stung my throat as I tried to catch my breath, like a knife stabbing me every time I inhaled. My hands gathered the tears, dripping down my palms and stinging my wrists.

America held me in a hug, and desperate for some form of comfort I buried my head into his neck and wrapped my arms around him

tightly. I must have surprised him because he let out a yelp before rubbing my back in an effort to help me. It didn't help, not as much as I would have liked. I just wanted this all to stop and to go away, I would have done anything at the moment to stop the pain. I hated it when I felt like this, my arms shaking and my legs suddenly lose their function. My head spinning with thoughts, each passing too fast for me to fully understand why it was there. Hidden in the crook of his neck, I found it hard to breathe and the heat of my rapid breathing suffocated me more. But I didn't dare reveal my face to the cold, in fear of someone seeing me as I was.

"It was all my fault." I cried between gasps. My breath hitched every time I tried to stop the crying, every time I tried to stop my senseless hurting.

"I should, I should have seen it sooner, i-i-i—"

"Russia, this wasn't your fault."

"Yes, it was!" The salty taste of my own tears made me turn my head slightly so they could run down away from my mouth. That opened up the small air pocket I hide my face in, allowing new cool air to replace the humid warm one.

"I should have tried harder, I could have- I-I, I could have saved him. If it weren't for me, he-he wouldn't be dead"

"Russia, don't say that USSR, he-"

"He wrote it himself. I allowed him to believe everything was fine, if I wasn't such an idiot I could have-"

"Russia, stop!"

I bit my tongue and paused, allowing him time to speak. Time I didn't want to give away, not when I knew I would be left alone with my thoughts. I needed to say what was in my head, instead of festering in my own cage of a mind with them. I couldn't allow myself to listen to them, or else.

“His death was not your fault, you were a kid, remember?”

Remember? Of course, I remembered, how could I forget being a stupid kid who couldn’t do anything to save the person I loved?

“Your dad loved you all more than anything, and he gave me that book to remind you of that. He knew you would need it, he knew what would happen and he wanted to make sure you had help.”

Why would anyone help me? I don’t deserve it, not when I could have done something to keep my family together. Not when I could have helped them when they all asked for it or did something to ease their pain. No, I had to be angry with everyone over things that weren't their fault. They couldn’t have known that their leaving would kill him, but I did. I was the one who knew and I didn’t do anything about it.

My wrists ached for the release of pain again.

“I want to help you, Russia, I really do. I want you to stop talking about yourself like that, you-you can't think like that.” He held me tighter and I peeked open my eyes. From here, I could see my room. In my room I had a new razor set on my dresser, waiting there to add to the new cuts I had. As much as I had wanted to stop, I had never shaken that feeling that deep down I knew I deserved it all. I always thought that it was my dad’s love for us all that kept him from speaking up, but now I knew it wasn’t. I had been the reason. And for that, I had to pay.

“You will just end up hurting yourself by doing so.”

I deserved what he didn’t want me to. But I knew America would stop me, I knew he believed what he said and in thinking that it wasn’t my fault. I, however, knew differently. But if I said any of that, he would stop me. And I didn’t want to be stopped.

“Russia?”

I sniffed, calming down slightly and finally was able to get a hold on picking myself back up. “Can we go inside?”

America nodded, holding me out in front of him at arm's length. Even though I knew I didn't deserve it, I still allowed myself to feel comfort within his touch.

In silence, we stood and I picked up my father's journal, stopping to face my dad's tombstone as America picked up the wrapping paper and stuffed it into the box. When he got everything, America wrapped his arm around mine to guide me back to my house. The snow was packed down into a thin path back to the door with a few inches of white powered gathering on it. The snow hadn't let up, coming down in a white sheet.

"You want to go up to your room and just talk?"

"I . . . I actually rather just be alone." I tried to shake him off again.

"I don't want to leave you alone, not for a little while at least." He stopped me and held my hands, covering the journal. I looked down at him, seeing my reflection in his shades. "You are too set in your ways to believe that this wasn't your fault so easily. So please," he moved his hands up to my arms. "Please don't go off on your own."

I looked down at his face, not understanding why he bothered to put so much effort into worrying about me. It would all be a waste, cause I knew the moment I could get away from him I would go right upstairs. But I couldn't do anything if he was following me the entire time.

"I won't."

"Good."

Then we walked back into the house, being greeted by the warmth inside. Voices came from the living room and kitchen area, the smell of food still lingering in the air. I had cooked a smaller dinner than the one I had at our family get together since not every one of my siblings came. Ukraine, for instance, left to go and visit Georgia. Kaz and Belarus stayed, but planned to go with Kyrgyzstan back to his home and be back the next day. The few of my siblings that

stayed for my dad or for me didn't plan to stay long.

I took off my boats and America made me wait for him as he shed off the pounds of clothing he wore. My eyes widened when I saw he was wearing my brown sweater.

"You still have that?"

"Hmm?" America looked at me and followed my gaze down to the brown sweater that was big on him. "Yes, I do."

"Why?"

He shrugged and answered, "I dunno. I like it, plus you gave it to me. So don't even think about asking for it back." Then he grabbed my arm, leading me to the living room filled with countries. Though I was emotionally exhausted, I found room to smile at his presence once more. How I missed it.

Maybe

. . . Maybe that razor could wait a little longer.

((**The 26th was the anniversary of the collapse of the USSR in case anyone was wondering. Whoo! Two chapters in two days! It's almost unheard of XD.**

**Still, thank you all for reading and stay tuned, cause I feel a blizzard coming in.))**

**~ Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**Galaxy**

# Information With Kaz

**Kazakhstan POV**

“Қар жаман емес. бізде уақыт жеткілікті (The snow isn’t bad. We have enough time.)” I told Belarus as she worriedly looked out the window. Yes, the snow was hindering the view of the outside world but we have dealt with worse snowstorms before. And my little bro was only a drive away, we would be fine.

“калі вы так кажаце,падобна, усё можа пагоршыцца. (If you say so, it does look like it will get worse.)” She voiced her concerns once more. I smiled playfully and nudged her shoulder, trying to get her attention away from the window.

“Кәне. Ресейдің жағдайы жақсы екенін көрейік. (Come on, lets see if Russia is okay.)” I finally got her away from the ever mounting snow and she begrudgingly followed me. He had been with that American ever since he stopped by. I could tell what had happened out there at our dad’s grave was intense, just by the red still in Russia’s eyes and the lightly frosted tear trails when he had came in. But as we always do with him, we never ask. He never answers us anyways.

As it has been, America was practically up Russia’s ass. Sitting so close behind him on the couch they were basically cuddling. I would never say that out loud, Russia would string me up by my wings if I did. So Belarus and I have been talking about it behind his back. How America is wearing one of Russia’s sweaters, a brown one he wore a lot that he hadn’t in awhile. Now we knew why, he gave it to the country that he must have a crush on.

“Wassup there Angel Boy!” America greeted me with a cheerful smile and a wave. I smiled back just as enthusiastic, if not more and gave him a little fluff of my wings to advertise my name.

“Wassup Ame!” I greeted him in English. I never really bothered to speak that language, I had no use for it. Everyone I knew spoke

Russian, or something similar, and I was very fluent in it. But lately I've been trying to branch off and make new friends with other English speaking countries and I have been trying to learn. Too bad its so fucking hard!

"What have you been talking about?"

Russia looked down at the book in his hands, one of his bigger red hands covering the cover. He's had that since he and America had came inside and has refused to put it down. And he wouldn't let us see it neither. "Nothing," he settled on looking back up at me, shoving the book into his pocket. It didn't take a genius to know what that word really meant.

Still, even with that dull look in his eyes, I didn't say anything. I knew better.

"Мы скоро уйдем, поэтому, если вы не хотите, чтобы Каз или я брали какую-либо еду, вам лучше пойти и потребовать ее сейчас. (We are going to leave soon, so if you don't want Kaz or me to take any of the food you better go claim it now.)" Belarus joked, using her thumb to point behind her to the kitchen. For a split second, me and Russia eyed each other. Everything stood still, the world had froze. Tension suddenly spiked as he jumped up to his feet and I started to race towards the kitchen.

"Бұл менікі! (This is mine!)" I quickly soared over the kitchen table to grab a container full of Beshbarmak.

"Ты трогай мои пельмени, я оторву твои перья. (You touch my Pelmeni, I will rip off your feathers,)" Russia held his chosen food away from me and bared his teeth like they were fangs. I hissed at him, flaring my wings.

"Did you just fly over the table, what the fuck!?"

We both turned from our standoff to see America had ran over to the kitchen, Belarus slowly drawing behind.

"Да, он делает это. (Yeah, he does that.)"

I glanced over and seen Armenia was siting at the table still, a small

plate of leftovers warmed up in front of him. I didn't even notice he was there until now. He was usually quiet, on his phone checking to see how his economy is doing 24/7 and making sure he had enough wealth. He usually goes unnoticed until he speaks up.

"Кешіріңіз, бірақ олай емес. (Sorry, but not really.)" I smiled, and held my favorite dish closer to me. Then I gave one last look to Russia out of the corner of my eye, sticking out my tongue at him. He did the same back to me.

"Вы б двое кінуць гэта (Would you two quit it,)" Belarus shook her head as she picked up things that we must have knocked over in our rush to make sure that our favorite dishes were claimed as ours. I gave an apologetic smile and tried to help pick up some of the cups on the ground.

"Когда вы двое будете готовы уехать, я могу отвезти вас в Кыргызстан. (Whenever you two are ready to leave, I can drive you over to Kyrgyzstan.)" Armenia spoke up, looking up from his phone. I nodded and gave him a smile, something I like doing to everyone around me. Armenia, along with my little brother Kyrgyzstan, where the only other countries that came here more often than the others. Armenia has his own place, but he likes to stay with us sometimes. Helping us (mostly Kyrgyzstan) financially when we need it. Or other things such as car rides.

"Можем ли мы взять немного еды, так как это просто вы будете здесь? (Can we take some of the food, since it's just going to be you here?)" Belarus turned to Russia. He nodded, eyeing America. I seen him shake his head no, and Russia rolled his eyes.

"Екеуіңіз сөзсіз сөйлей аласыз ба? Сүйкімді (You two can already talk without words? Awwww.)" I teased Russia and i swear if i wasn't his favorite sibling (yes i am, no matter what he says) i would have been attacked on the spot.

"Заткнись! (Shut up.)"

"What did he say?" America asked, pointing to me. I raised a brow and smiled at Russia, daring him to repeat what i said. He growled at me and that was the response that said it all.

"Каз, оставь его и его парня в покое. (Kaz, leave him and his boyfriend alone.)" Belarus scolded me, hands on her hips and shaking her head as she does when she gets in her mother mode.

"He's not my boyfriend!" Russia growled at us again.

"That's not what you said last night.~" America joined in on the teasing. He got a smile and a laugh from me, but a threatening glare from Russia. Usually, that can stop hearts and spread instant fear, but he had a bright red hue across his face.

“Жарайды, тоқтаймыз. (Okay, we’ll stop.)” I finally gave in after I was done laughing. “We have to get going anyways, before Arminia refuses to drive in the snow.”

“Подожди, сколько там? (Wait, how much is there?)” Arminian quickly stood and ran out of the room.

“ол өте жаман емес. (Its not too bad!)” I called after him, hoping he wouldn’t refuse to drop us off. He had done that a few times, refusing to risk crashing his car and ended up making us all stay here.

“Will you be okay here?” Belarus ignored my usual outburst, per the norm, and turned to Russia. I didn’t hear an answer so I assumed he nodded as a silent answer.

“Don’t worry, I plan to spend the night with him. I just have to tell Canada.”

I heard that name and spun around. “мен оған қоңырау шала аламын! және оған бір нәрсе сұрау! (Ooh! I can call him for you! I also have to ask him something, too!)” I didn’t mean to, but my wing had smacked Belarus in the face and she slapped my wing as a payback. I forget that they flare up when I get excited.

America gave no answer, only a confused and shocked look with his mouth slightly gaped open. He had no idea what I said, and it was only then I realized I hadn’t said that in English. My cheeks turned pink with embarrassment and I rubbed the back of my neck.

“I can talk to him for you. I need to tell him something.” I hoped I

had said that right. Canada had been helping me with my English whenever Ukraine had him over. I still found it funny how easily he had agreed to help her, even thought they hadn't know each other a long time. Then again, I had made one comment about how English was hard for me and he swooped in immediately to help me. He was really nice and funny and I liked him a lot.

“Sure, you just gotta press the call button, Its already dialed.” America handed me his phone and I happily grabbed it, taking it to the living room. I jumped onto one of the longer couches and stretched out my wings, holding the phone excitedly to my ear. The phone rang a dim tone until he answered.

“Hello?” Canada’s voice came through.

I sat up quickly and loudly said, “Hi!”

“Oh, hi Kaz how are you doing?”

“Great, I have Ame’s phone.”

I heard him laugh on the other line and I smiled wildly.

“I figured when I heard your voice. What’s going on?”

“Ame wanted to say he was staying here. For tonight.”

“Okay, that’s probably safe. I hear there is a bad storm out your way, I would hate for one of you to get caught out there.”

“Everything will be okay.” I tried to reassure him, Canada had always been a very nervous country. I thought that was kind of funny, honestly, cause he was always so nice and nervous and he could meet my own level of excitement. He was such a great country to hang out with, completely different from any kind of countries I knew.

“You sound really great, have you been practicing your English?” He asked, the sound of another voice in the background yelling almost drowning him out.

I beamed proudly, knowing that I had. “Yes!”

“That’s great. Can you teach me a word that you know, if you don’t mind.”

“Really? You-you want to learn a word from my language?”

“Yeah, I mean I’m helping you learn English. It seems fair that I learn some of your’s too.”

I was stuck smiling on the couch there, my knee bobbing up and down vigorously from the amount of excitement that was coursing through my entire body. My wings fluttered fast, lifting me off the couch a little before I forced myself to calm back down.

“Бұл өте қызықты болады! саған не үйретуім керек? Мен өте қызықты болатын көптеген сөздер білемін! (This will be so fun! What should I teach you? I have so many words that would be so fun!)”

“Uhh, Kaz? I can't pronounce all that”

My cheeks went red with embarrassment when I realized I had slipped back into my native tongue. I wasn’t embarrassed that I spoke in it, no he told me himself that I should never feel bad or ashamed of my own language. I didn’t, but it was nice that he told me that in case I did. I was embarrassed that Canada thought that what I said was a whole word, and one that I was going to teach him. I just forgot he didn’t understand Kazakh.

“Sorry. I got excited.”

“Aww, don’t apologize for that. Its okay to get excited, I find it pretty cool you do that.”

“Truly?” I blinked feeling my stomach do a flip. Shush nerves, I’m listening to Canada right now.

“Yeah, I mean it happens when you get excited. So its kind of like you show you are excited about your own langue enough that that’s what your brain switches to. If that makes any sense, I'm not sure if it does, sorry.”

“No apologies. No, no, no. Don’t apologies. No. Кәне, сіз жай

айттыңыз. (Come on you just said it.)”

“You can do it.” Canada cheered me on from the other line and I felt empowered by his encouragement.

“Apollo, no. Apology. Yes! No. Apologize! Міне бітті! бұл мен айтқым келген сөз! (That’s it! That’s the word I wanted to say!)”

His laughter came through loudly from the phone and I beamed proudly. My wings stretched out, and I eyed the lamp by me to make sure I didn’t knock it over.

“Don’t apologize. You found my voice excited. If I can’t then, neither can you.”

“I did, didn’t I?” Some shuffling noises and what sounded like a voice in another language spoke nearby. Not English, it seemed similar. Kind of like Philippine’s, but wrong.

“Hang on Mexico, I’ll get that for you.”

“I can climb on the counters!” The one I now recognized as Mexico spoke quieter, but very defensive. I knew he was shorter than most other countries, smaller than me, too, so the image of him trying to reach something high up was very amusing. I laughed out loud at the image, and I noticed Belarus peak into the living room. I waved to her and she gave me a wink.

Oh no what did I do? I don’t think I did anything, Belarus always does that when I do something that could get me in trouble and she knows about it. I haven’t done anything lately, have i? I do tend to get distracted a lot, I wonder if I did but forgot about it.

“Kaz, you still there?”

I shook my head free from the distractions and nodded. A second after I said, “yeah. I did not leave.”

“What word can you teach me?”

I thought for a moment and smiled to myself when I got it. It was so perfect, now that I think about it. “бақытты!” I proudly declared,

resting my hand on my chest and flaring my wings up dramatically.

“What does it mean?”

“Happy. You make me happy, I wanted to give you happiness to say.” I hoped I had said that right.

"I will have to write that down,” Canada muttered to himself as he tried to find something to write with. I smiled and thought that was a funny little quirk. After a moment he shouted in triumph and brought the phone closer to his mouth. “Can you tell me how to spell it?"

"Yes. I'll send a picture.” I set the phone down and grabbed the small notepad on the lamp table and the pen by it. Canada’s voice came through the phone, laughing loudly and the sound of Mexico’s laughter echoed his. I want to hang out with Mexico, he seemed really fun. Kind of angry, but adventurous. Maybe he would like my wings and since he is small I bet I could pick him up and fly around with him. I loved doing that to Kyrgie when he was little and didn’t know how to fly. I bet Mexico would get so scared.

I took the picture and sent it to him. Impatiently waiting for the the small print near the text to read from delivered to opened, I shook my knee quickly up and down. When it did, I jumped up excitedly.

“сіз оны алдыңыз ба? сіз оны алдыңыз ба?(Did you get it? Did you get it?)”

Canada laughed again and my face heated up. I had got excited and spoke in Kazakh again.

“Do you have it?”

"Yes, yes I do. Thank you, I'll write it down so i can remember it better." He told me and my smile grew wide. I feel happy knowing that he was purposefully trying to make himself remember.

“Hey, Kaz!”

I looked up front the phone to see that Belarus and Armenia were standing by the door, getting their stuff on to leave. I held up a

finger to silently tell them to hang on. “I have to leave, I’ll talk soon.”

“Okay, talk to you soon, too!”

“Bye!” I hung up the phone and looked at Canada’s contact picture for a moment or two. He was in a a big jacket, his usual red flannel underneath and his fur hat on top of his head.

I gave America back his phone as he was flirting with Russia. He kept shooting him down, and held him away at arms length. I picked on Russia once more before fleeing for my safety.

“Могу поспорить, что они соберутся через месяц. (I bet they will get together in a month.)” I said to Belarus and Armenia as we walked out of the house. Armenia’s car was in the driveway, the snow on it brushed off and the area around it had the snow shoveled out.The snow had gotten rather high in fact.

“я даю им немного дольше. может три? (I give them a little longer than that. Maybe in three?)” Armenia contradicted opening up the driver door. He had already started the car so it was pretty warm inside of it, so much so a faint cloud of steam rose from the hood.

“Я даю это на этой неделе. (I give it this week.)” Belarus said as we all got ourselves situated in the nice warm car. The seats were comfy, too.

“это очень смелый (That’s very bold.)” Armenia chuckled, driving us out of the driveway. I whipped my hand over the window to clear it, seeing the thick blanket of white outside. The sky was dark, grey clouds with light precipitation was mesmerizing. Especially how the snow fell in the  flurries that it did.

“С этим снегом? они долго будут в ловушке в этом доме, одни. (With this snow? They’ll be trapped in that house for a long time, all alone.)”

We laughed together, thinking that Russia would have no choice but to face his feelings head on now. Even if I didn’t think the snow

would get too bad, it could keep America over for a little bit. The chill of the air was enough to hurt any open skin, and where Russia lives (since its technically his house left by his dad, we all just kind of stay in it) the cold can get very deadly. He'll have to stay for a little while.

"Америка умрет. (America is going to die.)" I laughed, shaking my head. I saw Armenia nod in agreement.

"Вы долго разговаривали по телефону с Канадой, Каз. (You were on the phone for a long time with Canada, Kaz.)" Belarus turned to me, a smile splattered across her lips. She raised a eyebrow at me and I tilted my head in confusion. "он тебе нравится или что?(Do you like him or something?)"

"Да, конечно, я делаю! он классный! (Yeah of course I do! He's awesome!)" I smiled brightly, not catching onto what she meant right away. When I did however, my face grew a little warmer and I corrected myself, "Нет нет нет. по крайней мере, не так, я просто люблю его как друга. (no, no, no. Not like that at least, I just like him as a friend.)"

"Mmhm." Belarus and Armenia shared a look before turning back to me, wearing the look she usually gets when she has a bad idea. "скажи мне, почему Канада клевая? (Tell me, why is Canada awesome?)"

"О, ну, он действительно хороший, но каждая страна знает это. Он также может быть так же взволнован, как и я, чего не делают многие страны, такие как вы, ребята! Он тоже не против, когда я много говорю, плюс ему нравится видеть, как пылают мои крылья! Он сказал, что это напоминает ему огни, которые он видит в ночном небе. Он помогает мне выучить английский, хотя я не просил его об этом. Он говорит мне, что для изучения языка требуется много времени, плюс он напоминает мне, чтобы я делал перерывы и наслаждался своей собственной культурой. (Oh, well he's really nice but every country know that. He also can get just as excited as me, which a lot of countries like you guys don't! He doesn't mind when I ramble on either, plus he loves seeing my wings glow! He said it reminds him of lights he sees in the night sky. He's helping me learn English,

even though I didn’t ask him to. He tells me that it takes a long time to learn a language, plus he reminds me to take breaks and enjoy my own culture.)”

I thought back to when I had seen him personally for the first time. I mean, I have seen him before, but haven't actually talked to him. Ukraine had him over and Russia had me keep and eye on them. But then Ukraine asked me if I could keep a secret for them. With how pleasant Canada was, I totally would.

“Канада сказал, что я могу приехать, когда захочу, и он мог показать мне северное сияние, о котором он сказал, что мои крылья напомнили ему. О, и что мы можем отправиться в поход в маленькую хижину, которая у него есть, прямо у озера! Или фунт, немного воды, где он идет подледная рыбалка. Я еще не пошел, но это звучит так весело! Кроме того, я могу показать ему, как хорошо я справляюсь с английским, и показать ему некоторые крутые летные трюки, которые я знаю! (Canada said I could come over whenever I wanted to and he could show me the northern lights he said my wings reminded him of. Oh and that we could go camping in the little cabin he has- there’s a lake right by it! Or a pound, some water where he goes ice fishing. I haven't gone yet, but that sounds like so much fun! Plus, I can show him how well I’ve been doing with English and show him some cool flying tricks I know!)”

“О, и он думал, что я переключаюсь с английского на казахский, когда я взволнован, было круто! Оооо, он мне очень нравится, он делает меня таким счастливым! (Oh and he thought that me switching from English to Kazakh when I get excited was cool! Oohhh, I really like him, he makes me so happy!)”

I leaned forward, resting my elbow on my leg and set my chin down on my hand. I hummed lightly as I thought about hanging out with Canada again. We have done it usually when Ukraine had him come over, so most of our activities were limited to inside or around the house. But I really wanted to go to he park, walk around and show him my favorite tree I used to climb when I couldn’t fly. Ooh! Or he could show me the small animals he’s always talking about! I really want to see a raccoon.

Better yet! What if we do go to that cabin and we can just sit in front of a fire after a day of ice skating or playing in the snow and we just laugh and tell each other stories. I can look at him, seeing the glow of the fire on his kind face and he can look at me with his sweet smile and he could take my hand in his and we can lean closer slowly as we share a soft shy kiss.

My eyes widen and face grew red.

“О Боже, он мне нравится. (Oh god, I DO like him!)”

“Знал это. (Knew it.)” Belarus sat back in her seat and crossed her legs. “Я знаю, как работают мои братья и сестры, и это был только вопрос времени, когда ты влюбился в него. (I know how my siblings work, and it was only a matter of time before you fell wings over heels for him.)”

I shrugged, figuring she was right. As much as Russia can figure each of us out, Belarus can. Honestly, those two were so similar it scared some of us. In the sibling way though, Belarus wasn’t that scary. Russia was a different story.

“подождите, я думал, что Украина встречается с этим мальчиком? (Wait, I thought Ukraine was dating that boy?)”

We shared a look before looking upfront to Armenia. “Вы можете сохранить в тайне? (Can you keep a secret?)”

“ну да, конечно я- (Well, yeah of course I-)“

“из России. (From Russia.)”

“ой. (Oh.)”

After a few seconds of weighing his options, he nodded his head looking back at us through the mirror.

“Украина не встречается с Канадой. (Ukraine isn’t dating Canada.)”

“Почему нет? (Why not?)”

I shrugged and Belarus vocalized our lack of knowledge. “Мы не знаем. Украина не сказала бы нам, хотя я знаю, что они друзья. Когда она уезжает, она говорит нам сказать России, что она едет в Канаду, но обычно она направляется в лес, а не туда, где он живет. Это странно. (We don’t know. Ukraine wouldn’t tell us, I know they are friends, though. When she leaves she tells us to tell Russia that she is going over to Canada’s, but she usually heads to the woods instead of where he lives. Its weird.)”

“хмм. зачем Украине нужна Канада для сокрытия загадочных поездок в лес? (Hmm. Why would Ukraine need Canada to cover up mystery trips into the woods?)”

“я думаю я знаю. (I think I know.)” I raised my hand, as if it was a question asked at school. “На нашем последнем семейном обеде он сказал мне, что Украина хочет быть с кем-то еще, но Россия никогда не допустит этого. Она использует Канаду как оправдание того, почему она уходит, почему она возвращается с подарками или подобными вещами. (At our last family dinner, he told me that Ukraine wanted to be with someone else but Russia would never allow it. She uses Canada as an excuse for why she leaves, why she comes back with gifts or things like that.)”

“мы не знаем, кто другая страна. (We don’t know who the other country is, though.)” Belarus finished my thought.

We pulled up to my brother’s house. It was much smaller, fit to hold two people at most. That never mattered to us, we were raised to utilize what we could and adapt to different circumstances. A tiny house was nothing to other things we had lived through. Especially since this would be for a night or two.

“Украина - та, кто попадет в неприятности. Я боюсь, что она может оказаться втянутой во что-то, из чего она не может вытащить себя. (Ukraine is the one to get herself into some trouble. Im worried she might get caught up in something she can’t get herself out of.)” Armenia rubbed his hands nervously, turning to face us. We all nodded solemnly.

“она довольно способна на себя. (She is pretty capable of herself).”

“помнишь ее подругу? (Remember her friend?)”

I winced from the memory. It didn’t affect me directly, but the amount of grief that Ukraine had suffered? We all felt it, and we all still do. A friend she had made, one we didn’t know where she had met, wanted to get Ukraine away from USSR. Her name was lost to us, but her face and presence wasn’t. She fought for Ukraine, even if she had no chance against the strength of Soviet. One night, she and Ukraine tired to flee. We were all young at this time, so it hurt us that she wanted to abandoned us. Now that we were older, I felt guilty for feeling like that. We had woken up to hear her screaming, our father yelling and the cries of her friend.

We don’t know what had exactly happened, but Soviet came back into the house with her screaming and crying in his arms. I swore I could remember blood on him, too, but I couldn’t be to sure. Ever since then, we haven't seen her friend again.

“ну, это было тогда, и это сейчас. (Well, that was then and this is now.)” Belarus tried to break the dark silence with a happy voice. It seemed unsure of itself at first, but then she managed to keep it up. I tried a smile as well, but the gloomy feeling never left me.

“Я уверен, что все будет хорошо. (Im sure things will be fine.)”

I shook my head free of more rising memories, knowing that I can’t dwell on the past. I had worked past it and am now better. Lowering myself back down wont do anything good for me, not when my goal is to soar in the sky.

“я знаю, что они будут. (I know they will be.)” I smiled at them both, using my natural preppy voice and exciting personality. “В конце концов, нет места, как настоящее! Кстати говоря, мы должны подшутить над Кирги, прежде чем он уснет на нас! (After all, no place like the present! Speaking of, we gotta prank Kyrgie before he falls asleep on us!)”

Belarus smiled at me sweetly, happy for my positivity even after such a dark topic. I always had that gift.

“ну, тогда иди, уходи из моей машины! (Well, then, get going,

get out of my car!)" Armenia shooed us away and we laughed at him, but getting out as he said.

We waved bye as he drove off, and I stood out in the cold for a moment longer. Even though I wanted to move my mind and thoughts past what had happened to us, it still lingered on it. Just enough to make me pause and frown.

Belarus must have noticed, so she elbowed me. "так канада, а? (So, Canada, eh?)"

I smiled at her, my face growing red again. "Тсс, не перед Киргизией. (Shh, not in front of Kyrgie.)" We went up to he front door and happily let ourselves in. He didn't mind it, I know. Even if he, that wouldn't have stopped us.

"Если он узнает, что я люблю Канаду, он никогда не даст мне услышать конец. (If he finds out I like Canada, he will never let me hear the end of it.)"

**((Whoo. Short ass chapter for how long it took me. If I say sorry again, I'm going to be apologizing more than Canada, and I'm not sure if that's a win or a lose. I don't want to find out. If there is anyone who speaks Russian, Kazakh, Belarusian or any other language spoke in this book, one I'm sorry, but can you DM me and I can send you some sentences that need to be translated so they can be more accurate and less like google translate. That goes for any language too! All I can do is English plus the various native languages. But either way, I have gotten a LOT of good ideas that I am so using in upcoming chapters, and now that I have the filler chapter out of the way its time for me to have fun with these two idiots.**

**Oooohh, they are gonna get into some shit guys.**

**I'll see you in the next one.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Snowed In

**Russia's POV**

I was trapped.

No contact with the outside world, the snow blocking off any signal I could have or at least making it very spotty. I couldn't see outside, what I could see was pure white. No one could make it here, the temperatures were dangerous to be out in for any length of time. No one could reach me.

It was perfect.

At least it would have been.

"Damn, I guess Canada was right when he said there was a snowstorm. Im going to listen to him next time."

Being trapped in my house would have been fine. Trapped here with America? Someone can just shoot me now.

"I should have kicked you out when I had chance." I groaned through gritted teeth, not bothering to turn and actually face him.

"Butcha' didn't." He looked to me, speaking in a weird voice. I raised an eyebrow at him and rolled my eyes when I realized he was making yet another reference to something I didn't care about.

My hands were in my pockets, the large sweater over me providing some form of comfort. The journal that had belong to my father was held in my hands still, my thumb rubbing the cover of it. I could feel the grooves of sickle and hammer, along with smaller scratches that could have been from anything over the years.

"Hey, you okay?"

I blinked, noticing I had begun to get tears in my eyes again. I rubbed them away before turning to America. He gave me his look of pity again and I didn't have it in me to tell him off for it. Last night I had read through half of the journal, tenderly touching the pages afraid that they would crumble to dust just like-

"I held my eyes open forrr too long."
He knew I was lying, I could tell. But he didn't say anything further and I didn't want to talk about it.

"Okay. You want some breakfast? I can probably cook something up." He grabbed my sweater sleeve and started pulling me to the kitchen. He had done that the entire time he was here. Pulling me this way and that way, but also holding onto me wherever I went somewhere. He would not leave me alone, and when I went to the bathroom he had checked every nook and cranny making sure there was nothing in there that could hurt me. If he thought there was, he grabbed it and held onto it until I was done. Then as I went to sleep, he insisted on staying in the room with me until he knew I was asleep. An annoying thing he did too was make sure that he saw my hands. I had to hold them on the pillow, in his line of sight at all times. Stupid, but I did it anyway.

"Ve don't have Amerrrikan prrroducts." I reminded him.

"You got eggs?"

"Da."

"Milk?"

"Da?"

"Potatoes?"

I raised a brow, telling him he didn't need to ask that. How else would I make my vodka?

"Boom, breakfast right there. Scrambled eggs and potatoes!" He let go of my arm and pointed to a chair to sit down at. I rolled my eyes

but obeyed. America can be very noisy and annoying when he didn't get his way. And I was not in the mood to deal with a loud American.

I watched him move about my kitchen with little hesitation, grabbing the things he needed from the places they were. He looked overly familiar, but I reminded myself he had been in my kitchen plenty of times to know where everything was. Why he still remembered since he hadn't been by in a long time puzzled me. Muscle memory perhaps.

After a few minutes, I pulled out my father's book and held it under the table. I flipped to the entry I had left on and started reading.

*I had met with the Third Reich today.*

I shut the book with a loud slam.

America jumped and spun around. "What the hell was that?"

I looked at my father's chair then back to him. "Nothing."

To prevent any questions I set the book down on the table in front of me. He saw and nodded slightly, turning back to the stove quietly.

Ridden of his attention, I looked down at the book in front of me. I remembered him mentioning him but it was quick notes. How he had killed his father, as my dad did to my grandfather. Small things, how he had grown to be in power and a much stronger country. But this? It was one of their first meetings, and after knowing what I did? I didn't want to read anymore.

He had trusted him, trusted him with his life.

And he had taken that and stabbed him in the back.

A plate was set in front of me and I flinched away from the noise.

"Whoa, you okay man?" America asked sitting down across from

me. I nodded and looked down at the food he put in front of me. Scrambled eggs and square spuds.  It was basic, simple but it looked good regardless.

Quietly we began to eat our food. I put the journal back in my pocket.

"You know, we are going to be stuck here for a bit." He spoke up, trying to make small talk. I wasn't really in the mood for it, but that wouldn't stop him. I looked up at him to see what he wanted to talk about, then back down at my food.

"You wanna talk?"

"Nyet."

"That sounds like a yes to me."

I paused my eating to give him a look. He returned mine with a smug smile. I loosened on my glare and looked back down to my food. I knew he was right, and I had been wanting to talk to him for the longest time but I was hesitant. One, I can't trust him to ever tell the truth to me anymore, and two I can't allow myself to trust a country I know so little about. I knew America, yes, but he was hiding something. And if he knew most of my secrets, I needed to know his.

"I'll talk if you tell me about kountrrries in the kaves."

America suddenly choked on his food and quickly coughed it out, slamming his fist against his chest. I didn't move, only noted down his actions. Once he was done, he looked at me and made an audible gulp. I heard his foot tapping underneath the table, seen his mouth twitching downwards, his hands fumbling around each other as he struggled to find a suitable way to have them, and then his loud clearing of his throat. It was obvious he was nervous.

"This is about you." He quickly spat out. "And I told you, nothing happened."

I narrowed my eyes at him and tapped my fingers on the table in a rhythmic pattern. He flinched slightly, his face just barely scrunching up with each repetition. I knew some people don't like things like that in high stressed situations. They break faster. I was hoping it'd be the same with America.

Instead of cracking under my stare, he shook his head and adjusted his glasses. Then he leaned closer and interlocked his fingers. "Russia, you have been trying all day to avoid telling me what is wrong."

God damn it, he has more will power than I thought.

I sighed and decided on finishing my plate. Once he knew that I wouldn't talk, he finished his too.

Again, he wouldn't let me leave as he did the dishes. I sat there, tapping my fingers and watched him move around my kitchen again. He had made me breakfast, cleaned up afterward and won't let me hurt myself. If I wasn't pissed at him still, I would have thanked him. Knowing that I felt guilty. He was trying to make up for what had happened and I keep shooting him down. Granted, I owe him nothing, but that's not what it felt like.

As America was finishing up with the dishes, I stood to try and find some vodka. There is no way I am going to be feeling guilty about America of all countries. At least not sober.

"Isn't it a little early to be drinking?"

I opened my vodka and shook my head no. "Anytime is vodka time."

"Fair enough, weird-ass Russian," he joked drying off his hands. I didn't bother with a cup, just drinking straight from the bottle as I regularly do. I got a good chug in when America rolled his eyes and lead me to the couch.

"Yeah sure, if you get drunk enough maybe then you'll talk to me."

"Doubt it."

We sat down on the couch and he playfully shoved my shoulder. "Yeah, Yeah. At least drunk you likes me. Calls me 'Nice Country.'"

"Drrrunk me is drrrunk, zat's why."
He laughed at me and I smiled. As soon as I realized I did I downed another drink. No. I'm angry at this bastard. Even if he can be a little funny, I'm angry at him.

"Whatever, what do you wanna watch?" He grabbed the TV remote and turned it on. I didn't give an answer, knowing it would be pointless. When it turned on, all that showed was static, almost matching the flurry outside.

"Well damn. You got Netflix? Internet?"

I shook my head no and heard him sigh in discontent. I freely chuckled at that.

"DVD player?"

I nodded. "Movies arrre all in Rrrussian."

"God damn it."

"I zought you knew Rrrussian."

"Enough to get by in a conversation and guess what you were talking about."

I took another drink of my vodka as he figured out what he wanted to do now. The sound of static filled the room, the only sound other than his ramped foot-tapping. When I set my drink down on my leg, he grabbed it from me and started to take a drink from it. I was startled for a second then I glared at him. How dare he take my drink.

"I rather be slightly buzzed than board."

"Vith how yourrr drrrinking it? You'll be drrrunk in nyet time." I

shook my head at him, standing up to grab another bottle of vodka.

"Where are you going?" He jumped up to his feet quickly, my bottle still in his hand. I pushed him back down onto the couch and told him, "kalm down, I'm grrrabbing another drrrink frrrom kitchen."

"You have twenty seconds." He told me, crossing his arms and looking at me with a pouting face. He is such a child.
Relishing in my twenty seconds of freedom, I hurried to the kitchen to find another bottle of alcohol. When I opened the cupboard I wanted to curse him out. How dare he take my last bottle of vodka! I growled and looked into the adjoining cupboard. Oh, that bastard is lucky. I had some whiskey in the back. I haven't had that in a little while now. Maybe a change for tonight will do me good.

"Russia! Your time is up!" America called from the living room. I rolled my eyes at the order, knowing very well I had a few seconds left to open the bottle. I did just that and decided to take my time walking back.

"Do Russians not know how to count or something?" He asked me, then took a drink from the bottle. "you know this stuff tastes better when you freeze it."

"Ve know how to kount, but ve also know how to piss Amerrrikan's off as vell." I smiled at him and he stuck out his tongue at me. As I was sitting down, I addressed the second thing he had said, "and I don't kare about taste. When I drrrink, I vant to get drrrunk and zat's all zat matterrrs."

"Russians." America did a weird thing with his hands, holding them up and slightly shoving them my way before setting them back down.

I noticed he drank a considerable amount of the vodka, enough to get him pretty drunk pretty fast. "Holy hell Amerrrika, arrre you trrrying to get vasted?"

He looked down at the bottle, then back at me. "Maybe." He held the bottle up to his mouth and looked to the side.

I set my hand on the bottle and pushed it down. He frowned at me but didn't resist. "I vas one who vanted to get drrrunk. Not you."

"Uno reverse card bitch." He laughed at me, loosely waving around the vodka. I frowned, grabbing the bottle from him before he dropped it and set it down on the small table in front of us. Stupid American not knowing how much to drink. Especially since this was my vodka. My last one in fact. I can't even stop by to see if Finland has made any more, I'm snowed in and I can't leave America here by himself. And I can't take him with me, the cold would kill him.

. . . Then again maybe I should.

Deciding to make my alcohol last, I chose to only drink a little bit of my whiskey and save my vodka for later.

"Ruusssia~" America cooed from next to me. I slowly turned my head to him and raised an eyebrow.

"What?"

"I need more of that, I'm not that drunk yet." He nudged his hand towards the vodka.

"Oh trrrust me, you vill be." I pushed his hand away and he grabbed my wrist. I frowned and tried to pull my hand free, but instead, he tried pulling me closer to him. He gave me a toothy smile and I could see my glare in his sunglasses reflection. Once again the memory of his eyes hit me. There was something different about them, I had been able to determine for certain, but what it was or could have been I didn't know.

He opened his mouth to speak and I was thrown back into the present. "Well, Ruski, how do you feel about talking about your problems to the good ol' US of A?"

"Unlikely. How do you feel talking to me about zoes kountrrries in kaves."

He let go of my hand and shoved me back quickly. I sat up, expecting that kind of response from him. What I didn't expect is for him to be as forceful as he did. I rubbed my shoulder, and America immediately went into apologizing.

"Russia, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you."

I glared at him, as I had been doing all day. "If you vant to make up forrr it zen tell me what happened."

Instead of doing as I asked, America grabbed the whiskey from my hand and started downing that. I grabbed the bottle from him, surprised by his actions. I looked at him startled, holding the bottle close to me like it was some child. Whatever he knew, he was trying his best to forget. I couldn't let that happen. I didn't have any answers, and I needed those. There was no way I'd let him hide something that now involves me. Did he forget that I got kidnapped, too?

"There has to be something we can do."

America stood and started walking around. He stumbled for a second and almost fell onto the table. I grabbed the bottle of vodka I had set down there to make sure he didn't spill it. I could tell from his stumbles the alcohol was getting to him. Oh great, I'll have to deal with a drunk American. God damn him, this was for me.

"I have my speaker, I'm going to play my music." He told me, not bothering to ask for permission.

"I don't vant to listen to yourrr crrrappy Amerrrikan music."

"Why are you targeting me, man?"

"You arrre only other one herrre."

The speaker he pulled out of his coat pocket was pretty small, but as it powered on it boomed in a large voice. He's lucky where I live is a vast winter land, not for the noise control no. So that no one can hear him crying out for help as I murder him.

Even with my wish of finally being rid of him, I didn't get up to stop him.

"What's a song that could possibly make you hate me more than you already do?"

He tapped his chin with dramatic movements and obnoxiously loud humming. I shook my head at him, taking another drink of my whiskey. I wanted to reach that blackout drunk again, but with America already on his way there, I couldn't afford it. Still, I could get at least somewhat drunk.

My thinking was interrupted by the music that began to play from the speaker. At first, I didn't recognize it, but it started out with the sound of what I guessed were drums. As it went further in though, I realized what I was listening to.

America bounced with the music, holding the speaker up and waving it around. I let out a long sigh and shook my head, lowering my view into the bottle. This song, oh god I didn't know how to feel about it. I mean yeah sure the history stuck a little with me, but my god it was fucking funny.

My foot tapped with the beat to the song as America sat the speaker down on the table as it started its repetition of chanting "hey".

America bounced with each one, mouthing the words, going faster as they did. When they stopped, so did he.

This ought to be good, I thought to myself taking a drink.

America stood in front of me, on the other side of the table. He wiped his head around to face me and sang along with the lyrics, "there lived a certain man, from Russia long ago. He was big and strong with his eyes a flaming glow."

I shook my head watching his arm movements that went along with the lyrics.

"Most people looked at him with terror and with fear," he mocked me by sticking out his tongue, but then switched to using his hand for a fan.  "But to Moscow chicks, he was such a lovely dear."

"He could preach the Bible like a preacher. Full of ecstasy and fire." I shook my head at him and he nodded his head, becoming for me to stand up with him. "But he also was the kind of teacher women would desire." He winked at me and I took another drink.

"Ra ra Rasputin. Lover of the Russian queen. There was a cat that really was gone." He danced to the beat of the music, doing moves that I guess where supposed to mimic the ones I do.

"Ra ra Rasputin. Russia's greatest love machine. It was a shame how he carried on."

As the music played I watched him make a fool out of himself. He attempted to do another one of my dance moves, the prisyadka. But of course, he didn't have enough strength to do it and he fell over in a matter of seconds. Watching him fail like that made me laugh and I fought the urge to get up and show him how to properly do it.

America stuck out his tongue at me and started to dance with no clear pattern again. It was amusing, and with out thinking I started clapping along with the beat to help him time his moves.

"He ruled the Russian land and never mind the Czar," he stopped and pointed at me, before doing a dance he had once called 'the pennywise dance', "but the kazachok he danced really wunderbar. In all affairs of state he was the man to please. But he was real great when he had a girl to squeeze."

On squeeze, he wrapped his arms around himself and hugged himself tightly. He winked at me and I rolled my eyes.

"For the queen, he was no wheeler dealer though she'd heard the things he'd done. She believed he was a holy healer who would heal her son.

"Ra ra Rasputin, lover of the Russian queen. There was a cat that

really was gone. Ra ra Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine. It was a shame how he carried on."

He stopped his nonsensical dancing and stood in place, looking at me with a monotone expression. "But when his drinking and lusting and his hunger for power became known to more and more people, " he used hand motions as if he was giving a speech, "the demands to do something about this outrageous man became louder and louder!"

The music went into its second round of chanting "hey" and America attempted to do the prisyadka again and failed. Still, that didn't stop him, even if he struggled to get up correctly. I sighed and stood up, setting down my drink. He stopped what he was doing and looked up at me. I shooed him away and started doing the dance properly. I got through the rest of the chanting, kicking with the beat. America cheered and laughed, clapping and stomping with the beat.

When those stopped, I did a few other dances that I knew America couldn't do. He didn't have the stamina or strength for them, and it was nice to be able to show off to him.

I stood back up straight and turned to him as the song went to its next verse. "'Zis man's just got to go', declarrred his enemies."

"But the ladies begged, 'don't you try to do it, please'," America replied to my line.

"No doubt zis Rrrasputin had lots of hidden charrrms," I flexed my arms and held a closed-eyed smirk.

"Though he was a brute," America set his hand on my arm and I opened my eyes just as he fell towards me, "they just fell into his arms."

I caught him and held him back up, where he spun around to face me again. "Then one night some men of higher standing set a trap, they're not to blame."

"'Come to visit us', they kept demanding and he really came."

We stood side by side as the music turned to the chorus. For a moment, there was a click and suddenly we were both dancing the same and in sync with one another. The dances weren't too hard for him to do but Russian enough for me. **(Example: see the Just Dance video on the song. Relive the cringe with meee)**

"Ra ra Rasputin, lover of the Russian queen. They put some poison into his wine. Ra ra Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine. He drank it all and said, 'I feel fine'. Ra ra Rasputin, lover of the Russian queen. They didn't quit, they wanted his head. Ra ra Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine. And so they shot him 'til he was dead.

Back to back, we stood and said, "oh those Russians."

The song ended and then there was no sound for a moment. America was panting and leaned his full weight against me. My own breathing was a little heavier but not as bad as his. I smirked, feeling better that I could hold my self physically better than him. Even if he was up dancing more than me.

Another song began to play and America pulled himself away from me, wobbling on his feet. I saw his hand was reaching for the whiskey and I let him have a drink. I had plenty more. It's the vodka I wanted to save.

"You don't even look beat!" He shouted.

I shook my head, realizing he was drunk. No wonder he danced as loosely and strange as he did. I chalked it up to being a weird American.

"Vell, you look drrrunk."

He sat down on the table and shrugged. "Only a little bit."

When he realized what song was playing, he took a quick drink and slammed the bottle down. Then proceeded to dance to it, standing

on the table at one point. I let him act as crazy as he wanted, for now, sitting down on the couch to drink some more.

After a few more songs Ame collapsed on the couch right next to me. At one point he had danced with his scarf that was now tied around his head. I was a little buzzed, the sounds and music slurring together into what I thought were words but it turned out to be music. At least I knew enough to stop drinking there, I refuse to be fully plastered around Ame.

"Russsiaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa." Ame slurred, leaning against me and laughing to himself. I looked at him and poke his forehead.

"What you vant?"

"Im hungryyyy."

"Food is in kitchen."

"Come with meeeeee."

"I don't vant to."

"Tooo baaaaaad."

He grabbed my hand and started pulling me with him, trying and failing at least. He struggled, leaning and tugging on my arm while I barely moved from my spot. He stopped for a moment, to catch his breath, then got right back to pulling on my hand.

"Go do it yourrrself," I pulled my arm away from him and he let me go.

"Fiiiiiiine," he groaned and dragged his feet into the kitchen. I listened to him dig around in the kitchen for a few minutes, dropping a few pans and cursing loudly. I sat there sipping from the whiskey that was down to its last few drops, ignoring the music that still played from the speaker.

"I couldn't find the fridge, but I found a microphone!" Ame came

back into the living room holding up a wooden spoon. I shook my head, thinking that he was an idiot. But I knew that wouldn't bother him. To each their own.

He just danced around the living room, holding the spoon close to his mouth and shouting nonsense. I laughed at his actions, and I laughed harder when he spun around and slammed his head into the wall. He fell out of my view behind a couch and groaned.

"Arrre you okay?"

"Yep. Head pain."

My laughter died off a little as he struggled to stand up on his feet. His glasses were crooked, which he quickly fixed then adjusted his scarf. "I'm okay!"

"Shh, not so loud!" I giggled, trying to shush him and his loud laughter.

"You're loud."

"Nyet, I'm Rrrussia."

"No, you're Ruski!"

He erupted into laughter and fell forwards onto the couch, his face smushed into the cushion and his voice a muffled slur of noises. Seeing him act ridiculous made me smile and miss these moments. Whenever I was in a bad mood, Ame would find out and quickly do something to get me out of it. A dumb joke or prank, or trying to help me talk about it. He was a nice country to me. A little shit, albeit, but a nice one.

Why did I stop talking to him?

Oh. Right.

My smile left and I looked towards the vodka. I could spare a few more sips.

"Oh, I love this song!" America jumped up and started to get up and dance again. Its what I heard him do at least, I had my sights set on the bottle. The song that was playing was by a female singer, something about Hollywood I didn't care. America was shouting the lyrics like it would save his life.

When I turned back to him I could see him bouncing on the couch, trying his best not to fall but almost failing a few times. Alright, he is about ready to bounce off the walls, I'm going to put the drinks away so he doesn't get his hands on them for the rest of the night.

I stood, vodka in hand since it was the only bottle I needed to worry about.

"It's a party in the U.S.A!" America shouted, raising his fists into the air. I stood there watching him jump up and down, his improvised microphone in hand and his scarf trailing behind his movements. At first, I was going to tell him to stop jumping on the couch, but my voice failed me. For a moment, even if it was a split second I was reminded of just dancing with him with no thought of the recent strains we had. It was peaceful, actually. Energize peace.

I allowed myself another moment to watch him act ridiculous, the music slowly fading away. America did care for me, in his own way and was always trying to show me. He had come to me on the anniversary of my father's death, ready to cheer me up even after I told him to never talk to me again. Why did I feel so guilty telling him that? I always treated him poorly, and he rarely did it back to me.

Through a frown and monitored expression, I wanted to smile. He was a nice country. Nice, funny, sweet, an absolute dumbass, cute.

My eyes shot open at the thought.

Cute!?

America laughed loudly and let out a whooping noise. I felt butterflies swarm in my stomach and my face grew warm as blood flushed my cheeks. In an effort to hide my flustered expression, I

looked down and crossed my arms over myself.

Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit.

No, no way.

I spun on my heels and hurried to the kitchen walking stiffly. No way in hell, never in a million years would I find America... Cute!?

With more force than I had meant, I shoved the vodka back in the cupboard. No, it had to be that! It was just the alcohol, there is no way I can find America's stupid face cute. Or feel any sort of that towards him.

My foot tapped rapidly as I tried to rationalize what I felt. Vodka hadn't done that to me before, but maybe the combination of the whiskey and vodka? No, that can't happen, if anything whiskey would make me more irritable. Why the hell did it to the opposite!?

"Ruuuuuushiaaaaaa!"

I jumped at the sound of his voice, my heart still racing.

"Russia, can I have more whsikeeeeeey!"

"Nyet!"

I was silently surprised by my own urgency in my voice, trying to desperately calm down. Nothing is wrong, I did not think of America like that, it was a random thought that will never happen again. And I refuse to make a fuss, especially if it didn't happen.

"You don't need anymorrre." I looked at America. He was draped across the couch, spread out like a starfish. His scarf was on the ground sprawled about as if he had dropped it when he was jumping around. The biggest shit-eating grin was on his face, his head tilted towards me.

"You're really hot."

I frowned tightly, ignoring the rising heat that I felt in my cheeks and the free-falling feeling in my stomach.

"Shut up."

Stiffly, I walked over to sit on the other couch and maybe lay down for a little while, but America grabbed my hand and pulled me to the couch he was on.

"No," he complained, "don't goooo I need my big scary Russian."

"Vell I kan stand to lose my pain in the ass Amerrrikan," I remarked, sneering but sitting down next to him none the less. He cuddled my warm, tightly wrapping his arms around my own and I once again ignored my blushing.

"Awwww, you called me yours."

My eyes widened and I cursed myself for uttering such a thing.

"Come on Ruski, I wanna drink." America stood up and started pulling on my arm, trying to pull me off of the couch. I gave him a death glare. I had just told him no more drinks.

Growing tired, and annoyed, I pulled my arm back to myself to get out of his grip. Well, that was the idea at least. Instead, America held on and fell on top of me. Quickly, I tried getting him off of me, but my body froze while my mind kept yelling at me to move.

In the midst of my panic, I felt America's arms wrap around me and he sat up a little more so he was a little taller than eye level. I swallowed hard, expecting a flirtatious comment. And right on cue, he smiled down at me and said, "Why Russia, if you wanted me to stay bad you could have said.~"

"Why the hell vould I vant you?" I argued back, my vision going blurry for a second. I shook my head to be rid of it.

"Well, you haven't pushed me off. Do you like me being on your lap?~"

I frowned, trying not to be embarrassed. He wasn't being very creative and was a little more forward then what he normally would be. I think the drinks were getting to his head. Wait, I already knew that. But still, it'll be a little harder to get him to fuck off and leave.

"If you vant me to like it, you better imprrress me.~"

My hope was he would panic and try to get away as he always did when I turned the flirting onto him. From my memory, it always worked. He would get all flustered and tried to get away. I wasn't proud of myself, no, but I figured it'd be funny to see him fall onto the table. And prove to him that what he says or does has no effect on me, unlike the reverse.

That's not what happened.

Instead, America leaned forward, turning my head to the side. I tensed up when I felt his warm breath on my cheek, trailing down to my neck. My hands grabbed a hold on whatever they were closest to, my own legs. Even though I didn't feel it myself, I still felt the material of my own pants.

When I felt his lips graze my neck I jumped. I felt sweat start to form on my forehead and my heart started to pound in my chest. I swore, since he was pressed up against me, he could feel it. If he did or not, he didn't do anything about it. He planted a soft kiss on my skin, his hands holding my hips.

Why the fuck am I letting him do this? Why the fuck am I letting him do this? Why the fuck am I letting him do this? Why the fuck am I letting him do this? Why the fuck am I letting him do this? Why the fuck am I letting him do this?

I could feel the heat rising in my chest and flooding my cheeks as he began to lightly bite down, circling his tongue and sucking on the skin. I bite my lip hard, trying desperately to think of something. Why wasn't I stopping him?

America trailed his tongue down my neck, and when he reached a spot that was oddly more sensitive I jerked upwards. Quickly, he began sucking on that spot, biting down and kissing as he had before. He was trying to leave a hickey and I was letting him!?

His movements got slower and delayed, but he started to push his full weight onto me. I set my hands on his arms going to push him off of me, but as soon as I was about to I lost the strength to do it. The heat that radiated from my neck because of him almost made me lightheaded and I found myself grabbing his shoulders to pull him closer.

When his movements stopped, I was confused and, admittedly upset. I waited for a second to gather my surroundings and regain control of my own thoughts. I felt America's chest rise and fall slowly, in sync with the deep breaths I could feel on my neck. They sent shivers down my spine again as they rushed over the sensitive skin on my neck. He felt deadweight, lose like a rag doll.

Did he fall asleep?

I turned my head but with how he was laying I couldn't see his face. I did feel his sunglasses stabbing my cheek and neck though, and it was uncomfortable.

Moving as slowly as I could, I reached for his glasses and began to slip them off of his face. He groaned and shuffled in his sleep, wrapping his arms around me and I paused. After a second I got them off and set them down on the cushion next to us.

America was not moving any time soon, I knew. I didn't know how late or early it was, I had closed the blinds and I don't have any way to tell the time right now. I could use a nap, shake off what just happened.

Another deep breath on my neck rose goosebumps all around my body.

I shut my eyes and tried to think. My cheek felt a bit better now that I didn't have his sunglasses poking my face-HOLY SHIT!

My eyes shot open when the realization hit me. I had taken off his sunglasses! Without thinking much about his eyes, I had taken them off! They no longer cover whatever he was trying to hide from me.

The temptation was huge.

America snored in his sleep.

Should I? He was right there, unable to hide what he wanted to keep hidden. Was that fair? He did catch me cutting and had seen my scars before. That was something I wanted him to never see, but he did. He actually helped bandage my cuts. Then I woke up next to him.

I shook my head free of those thoughts when I felt my face warm up again.

No. He saw what I didn't want him to see.

Making up my mind, I leaned back a little more and tried to see his face, I had to tilt his head in order to do it, but just as I was about to see his eyes I shut my own. No, I can't do this. I don't want to make him feel violated. What the hell am I thinking, he still has yet to tell me about the caves. I got fucking kidnapped! If anything, he owes me an explanation. And if he refuses me one for that, I'll settle for something else he's hiding.

I opened my eyes and looked down. I expected to see a horrendous scar, pealed skin or something else horrible he would want to cover up. But I saw nothing. The area around his eyes was fine, nothing that he would want to hide.

Was he even hiding something?

I chewed on my tongue as I thought, trying to get a better look at him to make sure that I wasn't scanning over something. No, he had to be hiding something. He has gone as far as wrapping a blindfold over his eyes, he has to be keeping something.

. . .

His eyes.

Maybe it's not the area around the eyes, maybe it's his eyes themselves.

I thought about pulling open his eyelid, but that seemed excessive. I'll wait until he woke up, and he can't dodge the topic. We are going to be stuck in this house for a long time, he'll crack eventually. Besides, what is he going to do? Run out into the blizzard-like a lunatic?

He exhaled deeply again and it brushed against the hickeys that I now undoubtedly had on my neck. I shivered and I felt my cheeks warm up again.

Oh great, what am I going to do about those?

**((Ha ha, it's happening! Oh, we are gonna have so much fun with this. That is if Russia stops beingalittleshit- ANYWAYS, thank you all so much for waiting and being patient and as understanding as you are it means so much to me. Side note, to make things eaiser what Soviet wrote down is all in Russian unless stated otherwise. Just to make things easier.**

**Ill see you all in the next one!))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Build Up

**Narrator's POV**

America woke up with a hangover.

He groaned, not bothering to open his eyes. At that moment, all he wanted was to fall back asleep, to be ridden of the pounding in his head. He would even great death welcomingly in his pain and sleep-deprived state.

After a few minutes, he Ipened his eyes and let out a yawn, peeved that he couldn't fall asleep. His vision returned to him and he squinted, noting that everything seemed brighter. The light seeping through curtains and the lamp seemed to pulsate in rhythm to the dull pounding in his head.

"Fuuuuuuuck," He groaned and turned his head back into what he thought was a pillow. It took him a moment to realize that it wasn't. When he did, he could care less. Then he opened his eyes once more and noticed a familiar brown sweater and red skin. It dawned on him that he was laying on top of Russia.

The instinct to jump off of him and have yet another of a series of gay panics was overruled by his headache and sickly stomach. He didn't want to risk getting up and throwing up all over the floor, and possibly even Russia. Besides, he was comfortable and was laying on top of Russia. Why would he want to move?

America peaked open his eye, looking up at Russia's sleeping face. His mouth was shut, in a relaxed but downward from. The usual cold or stern expression that was on his face was gone, leaving him in a peaceful state. He looked really attractive, causing a warm feeling to make itself known in his heart and stomach. What was odd, though, was how brighter the colors were still. And how a weight was seemingly losses from his face.

His hand cupped over his eye, expecting the usual feeling of

sunglasses there. But there was nothing.

Shooting upright, America's head spun on a swivel as he tried to spot those valuable barriers to his secret. He saw them on the cushion next to him and reached to grab them. He felt Russia stir underneath him and he felt something rub against his butt. His brows furrowed together, and he looked over his shoulder to see that Russia had his hands cupped around his ass.

"Well, that's interesting," was the first thing that America thought to say. He'll think about that in a moment, what he needed was his glasses. He hurried to grab his glasses before Russia woke up. Then he'll ask Russia why was he grabbing his ass, and make a comment about it not being a straight thing to do.

When he had his glasses in his hands, he practically smacked them over his face. A little relaxed, he exhaled lightly and turned his head back to Russia. His eyes were shut and his breathing was steady. He knew enough to know when Russia was fake sleeping and when he was really sleeping. Russia was in fact asleep.

Then he noticed his neck. The obvious marks of hickeys.

Memories of the previous night came flooding back to him. All up until he guessed he fell asleep.

America sharply inhaled through clenched teeth. "Ohhhh, I'm going to die."

He spoke too loudly. Russia moved his head and groaned slightly, sifting a little more under his body. Panicking, America lowered his head as quickly and softly as he could. Then he steadied his breathing and tried to pretend he was asleep.

Russia began to stretch out, curling his hands into a tight fist. The touch made America tense up but he decided to keep pretending to sleep. Just until he could stop his headache since he didn't want to deal with a pissed of Russian right at the moment.

Although, he felt kind of proud of himself for drunkenly making those marks on him. Kind of like revenge. In a weird way. Which

made him feel slightly guilty, but he still couldn't help the pleased blush that formed on his cheeks.

With a low yawn, Russia began to wake up. He had a foul taste in his mouth, one he recognized as the after taste of late-night drinking. Why was he drinking? Oh yeah, he's fucking trapped in his house with America. Damn it, the bastard got drunker than himself. How dare he try to take his self proclaimed rightful place.

In a moment of haziness, Russia didn't remember most of the night. What he did remember was that he was out of vodka. He thought about making more but then he remembered he didn't have all the ingredients for it. Potatoes yes, he had those, but not enough of everything else.

He blinked open his eyes and came to terms with the fact that he was awake now. Quickly he noticed America laying on top of him. He jumped, blood rushing to his cheeks. Almost as fast, the memory of them dancing together, how he thought he was cute, and America giving him hickeys hit him. He sat there frozen, knowing that America was still in the same spot he had left him in, head buried in his neck, arms loosely wrapped around him, and his own hands on-

Russia jumped, quickly throwing his hands up in the air. Shit shit shit shit shit shit shit.

America groaned, shuffling a little on him.

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.

He needed to get the fuck away from this situation at once. This was just a huge reminder of what had happened last night. How he felt. No, no that's impossible. He didn't feel anything towards America, and he can't feel anything like that, especially towards a guy. He isn't gay.

Even with that thought in his head, he still found something comforting in America being there with him. He couldn't deny that, and instead ignored other possible explanations that pointed him to having feelings for him. He had confided in America about things

that had troubled him before. He had been holding so many things inside again lately, and he had needed to get them out. So far, America had been the one who he told without him judging him. It was weird and certainly unexpected but it was nice never the less.

A smile curled onto his lips without his knowledge as he looked at the still form of America. The little shit did have a way of making him feel better, too. He even took care of him in his own way. He insisted that his father's death wasn't his fault, even though deep down he knew it was. At the moment then, that was the only thought he had in his mind. It was his fault and he needed to pay for it somehow. No one else would even dare to make him pay, they would instead try and stop him or talk him out of it. So he knew he had to do it himself. But America wouldn't let him have that chance, and now in a more rational mind, he realized that hurting himself was fruitless. Nothing could bring back his dad. If only he could tell himself that in those moments.

America tried not to flinch as he felt Russia's hand on his head. Why he was quiet and not moving now was beyond his realm of knowledge. When Russia started to caress his head slowly and lightly, it added to his confusion. Well, confused or not he didn't give two shits. Russia wasn't letting him go any time soon. Where was the shame in pretending to be asleep a little while longer to enjoy this?

When he felt himself get picked up, however, it was startling. Russia had stood up while holding onto him still. Carefully and as gently as he could, Russia turned around and lowered America back onto the couch. He was sad to lose the warmth of the smaller country, but he couldn't have him waking up and being in the position that he was. He didn't want to make it easy for him to say something flirty now. Not that he wants him to anyways.

With slight hesitation, Russia went upstairs to change into new clothes and to get rid of the bad taste of alcohol out of his mouth.

America listened to his footsteps, waiting until they had gone up the stairs before he sat back up. A little disappointed that the small moment they had was over, he sighed in discontent. Did he really have to leave? Probably, but he didn't want him too. Why was he

stroking his head like that? Russia claimed to hate him, or at the very least not like him in any kind of romantic way, so what was that? You don't normally caress your friends' head in silence as they sleep on top of you after you both head a heated drunken moment in a platonic way. To put it simply, that was very gay of Russia to do.

Maybe Russia did start liking him but denied it. The thought of that excited America. He liked Russia, a fact that he had come to terms with a while ago. What he didn't expect was for Russia to return those feelings at all. He had called himself the reluctant friend of America, and it sounded like that was hard for him to say. If Russia did have a crush on him it would take him forever to admit to that and actually do anything about it. And America knew for sure he would not give up on Russia. He was hot as fuck, that accent of his was dreamy and he wasn't entirely sure if anyone else would care enough as he did for Russia's emotional problems.

Oh god. Would Russia even care about his?

America sat on the couch with that thought in mind for a while. What would have been a concerning while. A long enough while for Russia to do a few things, and get into clean clothes, which was now was just jeans and a sweater to cover his neck. He wanted to get into more comfortable clothes, but he still had America over. And for however long that was he didn't know. Whenever the winter got like this he waited and only knew it was okay for him to leave after someone stopped by his house.

When he came back downstairs, he saw America was awake.

"Hey."

He jumped and quickly spun around, holding his hand up to keep his glasses steady.

Russia laughed lightly, feeling proud in his ability to scare the smaller country. But he paused when he noticed the distress that still lingered on his face. "What's wrong?" He quickly said.

America blushed from embarrassment, not expecting to be startled

or confronted with his troubling thoughts while having them. Plus by now he should be used to Russia startling him.

“Nothing, just, um a hangover.” He waved off his concern. Russia looked like he was about to press for more, so he quickly added, “you hungry? I can make food again, or warm up leftovers?”

Russia decided to follow along with his distraction, for now at least. He could ask about that later. America made breakfast again, Russia saying nothing. It was a quiet morning for the both of them, Russia attempting at conversation. It fell on deaf ears, or a few quiet moments and America humming a “what” or a “huh”. His expression was distant, and he picked at the leftovers more than he ate.

As their day moved on, it didn’t change. Russia was thankful for the silence, it was nice. But it worried him as well. America is never this quite, at least not for this long. He is rarely like that. It was getting harder for Russia to pretend as if he didn’t care. Because in truth, he did. To some extent, at least.

“Amerrrica?” He finally turned to him. The country didn’t notice he had been spoken to, his eyes fixated on the movie in front of him. It was in Russian and he had no idea what was happening, he hadn't really been paying attention to it anyways. He hadn’t been paying attention to much, actually. He knew that but didn’t do anything to prevent that. I mean, how could he think of something else? He expected to be happy about the idea of Russia liking, even if it was uncertain he actually did, but that’s not what he felt. He was nervous. Not about not being liked, he knew everyone liked him. No. It was more than that. It went deeper.

Was he even worthy of being liked?

Wasn’t he a horrible country?

He has these black eyes. He has this apparent dark past, one that he cant correctly remember himself. Every time he tries, he feels a pain in his chest. It becomes instinct to change the subject. To stuff it further down.

His episodes have been worse lately. The burning sensation was worse, the black stuff so far has been the only thing that has stayed the same. He's been speaking the same language, or ones he felt where related to it lately, too. It seemed to be pointing at something, but his own mind screamed at him to not to think about it. Don't seek out answered you can't handle, it seemed to say. America, of course, had no choice but to listen to it. He couldn't ask anyone about it anyways. And it's not like he could read what he's written down in the notebook he used to carry around with him everywhere. He had torn that up awhile ago. He didn't mean to, it was like in the heat of the moment he watched his hands grab the book and start tearing each page from its space and ripped up each paper that was written on into smaller bits.

Anything that was helpful was gone. He couldn't remember it anyway.

He's gone completely blind for a while, as well. First, it was color. Then it was everything. He feared he would lose his other senses as well. Or worse.

What if he lost his mind?

"Amerrrica!"

He jumped, whipping his head around. For a moment he forgot where he was. Russia had his hands on his shoulders, his expression full of fear and worry. Almost as quickly as he saw him, he remembered where he was. Living room. House. Russia. Right.

"W-w-What?" America leaned back, trying to get free from Russia's hold.

"You verrre shaking, and you. You," Russia let go of him, and in a small motion pointed at America's arm. Red scratches were dragged down his arm, a few drops of blood on the small breaks in his skin. He realized he had his arms wrapped around himself loosely; he must've dug his nails into his skin. Considering his nails were pretty short and dull, he wondered how much pressure he applied. And how did he not feel it?

“Sorry, I was just thinking of something,” America forced a laugh. “Did you know that when porn stars get undressed, they are technically getting dressed for work?”

“Amerrrica, I know forrr fact zat’s not what's koncerrrning you.”

“I know. It’s the fact that when the CIA goes to sleep, they are technically still going undercover.”

“Amerrrica.”

“You know, I saw on Facebook a picture of the very first camera being made.”

“What is wrong?”

“Well, first of how did they get a picture of that?”

“Amerrrica!”

“What?”

Russia started to get a little irritated. He is trying to be comforting here, and America is continuing to dodge what is wrong. He could ignore it for a while, but now he found it infuriating. He’s trying to be for once a little less critical of him, and he’s basically telling him to fuck off.

“You’rrre off. What is wrong?”

“Nothing, dude,” America pushed Russia away, moving away. His voice was laced with annoyance, a tone America didn’t mean to make so sharp. “Lay off will you?”

Russia narrowed his eyes, trying to relax his quickly flaring temper. It didn’t work.

“Fine.”

Russia sat back and turned back to the movie. He crossed his arms and wasn’t paying attention to what was on the screen. He was too busy festering in his own annoyance. He would soon get over it, but

not quick enough. In the meantime, he will sit there and rub his wrist and try to adjust the bandages from under his sweater sleeve.

America sat close to him and felt regret. He wished Russia pushed a little more. He didn't know why, but he did. But at the same time, he wanted what was in his head to stay there. The alcohol did little to help. Now there he was, wanting nothing but to be distracted. To forget.

Little did he know it was working.

With years of practice burying things deep down, he had forgotten much of his history. His upbringing, his entire self-identity was one made with blood. That blood was still on his hands, and he had covered it up. He had built a wall around it, making sure that he would never break it. But walls like that aren't stable. They break. They always do.

If only he could remember. It could have saved him.

It also could have stopped what was going to happen next.

**((Why what's this? A 2,983 worded chapter that took two weeks? What? It's outrageous! I actually have no idea why this took me so long, well actually I know why but I'm sure a few of you would know what I mean. But I'm trying a new thing. Im hoping to post at least once a week. And if I write a longer chapter, I'll say this one will take a little bit to write. Trial run so I don't leave you all waiting for like two weeks.**

**Ps. It's 5am where I am right now and I cant remember if I finished this or not. One way to find out!))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Secrets Out

**Narrator's POV**

The storm was not letting up. Russia noted this as he stood by the window, a small cup of whiskey in his hand. All he saw around himself was white, flurries of snow being picked up by the wind and being thrown about in a tornado fashion. It was soothing to watch, but threatening all the same. The snow did stop falling as heavy as it was last night, then started up with more ferociousness a few hours later. Now it seems like it was calming down again. Perhaps they would be able to clear a path sometime soon.

They meaning just Russia of course, he could handle the cold better than anyone else.

"There is no hot water!" America's voice came from the kitchen.

Russia sighed and shut his eyes. Of course there wasn't. It was too cold, the water pipes would be too chilly for it now. They were lucky they didn't freeze solid yet. Plus it didn't help that America takes hour-long showers. Later in the day, the warm water should be able to run. As long as America listened to what he was told to do that is.

"Just keep vater rrrunning."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've dealt with the winter before too you know." America turned the handle to let a steady stream of water run from the faucet. He couldn't remember who told him to do that growing up, but he was happy he remembered. Running water made it harder for the pipes to freeze solid. Knowing that made him seem less like an idiot to Russia.

"Not one like zis, I assurrre you."

"Yadda yadda, I know kold cause I'm big Rrrussian," America muttered to himself, mocking a Russian accent.

Russia heard him but decided to ignore it. No use in bring up another reason to argue. It wasn't too much of a problem anyways.

His drink finished, Russia sat down on the couch and looked over his shoulder to see where America was. He was busy in the kitchen again, making a small snack for both of them. He adjusted the bandages around his wrist and grimaced slightly at the pain that inflamed them with the rubbing of the material.

"Hey Ruski! Do you have games or anything? Im bored and the games on my phone aren't holding me over!"

Russia shook his head but smiled at America's behavior. He caught himself and forced a frown, thinking of something to distract him. He hated how he thought of the small things that had annoyed him before now amused him and dare he even say he enjoyed them. It was one thing finding his dumb jokes not as dumb, but it was another thing thinking that his stupid face wasn't as stupid as he thought.

"Hey, did you hear me?"

Russia looked up at the doorway towards the kitchen. America was leaning against the wall, his arms crossed. "What, were you caught daydreaming about me again?~"

"Shut up," Russia looked away, trying to stop his face from growing red.

"You okay? You seem a little off." America walked over to him, dropping his attitude. He had noticed that Russia was still reclusive, still holding back. And he knew he had to do something about it. When he sat down next to him, Russia had leaned away.

"I'm fine." Russia huffed out, a little bit sourly he admitted but he chose not to care.

"I call bullshit."

"I kall you need to stay out of my business." He shot him a glare, and America didn't even budge. He was already used to him being as defensive as he was, even his sharp tone didn't bother him. He

understood where it was coming from, and knowing that his mannerism wasn't as scary either.

"Well, I'm American. I get into everybody's business." He stretched out, laying across Russia's lap. He tucked his arms under his head and crossed his legs, looking up at the bigger country.

"Believe me I know."

They both chuckled lightly, Russia for a moment forgetting he wasn't supposed to. When it did come to him, he quickly looked away and tried not to focus on America so much. He ignored the impulses he got like they were another problem he had to burry.

America noticed Russia force a frown and turn his head away. How dare he resist him trying to make him feel better. This was going to be a little harder than he thought. He hummed and shut his eyes, trying to get a little bit more comfortable. If Russia won't open up, then America will wait until he will. It's not like they can go anywhere anyways.

"Arrre you going to get off of me?" Russia bounced his leg up, getting America's attention.

"Nope."

He sighed and scratched his wrist, thinking of something to do. Admittedly he was growing bored as well. Maybe he could grab the old games he and his siblings used to play all the time. Those weren't so bad. Old yes, but nostalgia would be nice.

America noticed his scratching and narrowed his eyes.

"Hey Ruski, how much of your father's journal have you read?"

Russia turned to him, caught off guard by the question but answered none the less. "I'm almost finished. Why?"

"Nothing. Was just curious." He shrugged, trying to play off his suspicions. Russia hadn't bothered to notice, in fact, he was trying hard not to notice America looking up at him with his head in his lap. He didn't like the weird feeling it gave him.

He adjusted the bandages again, absentmindedly doing so.

“So uh. How you handling that? I know how you feel about your father.”

“Im fine.” Another tug of the bandages. It moved the top wrap just slightly enough to see a faint stain of red.

He couldn't believe it.

Quickly he sat up and grabbed Russia's hand, bringing his bandaged wrist closer. Russia tore his arm free, his eyes widen with shock.

“What the fuck wherrre you doing?!” He shouted, pushing America off of him. He fell to the floor and hit the back of his head on the table, causing him to yell in pain. He hissed, rubbing where he was hit.

“What the hell man,” America groaned through clenched teeth.

“Don’t you know how to leave well enough alone!”

Russia stood, stomping over America’s body that was laying on the ground. Why didn’t he ever leave things alone? If he wanted him to know he would have told him. God, his father was right about him. The nosy American and his stupid persistence. He doesn’t know when to stop.

“You did it again, didn’t you?” America stood up, rubbing his head. It wasn't too bad, and he had suffered worse before hand.

“I did nothing,” Russia muttered under his breath, looking down at his bandaged wrists.

“Is that why you have been quiet? Why you’ve been refusing to talk to me?”

“Nyet.”

“Then what is it? You’ve obviously been hiding something from me.”

“Just leave me alone.”

“Russia, I just want to help you!”

“Vell, I don’t vant yourrr help!”

Russia turned around fuming. His hands were curled in tight fists, shaking from the effort. He narrowed his eyes at America, the smaller country bravely standing his ground. In stature, they were the same. Both strong holds on themselves, no sign of being scared or wanting to back down. The only difference was that he had his face of concern. Concern that Russia didn’t want.

“Well, you can't keep everything inside!”

“Oh like you'rrre any better!”

“What does that mean!?” America crossed his arms, trying to cover himself a little.

“You’rrre one to talk, zat’s what it means. You’rrre the most secrrretive kountrrry I know!”

“Russia, this isn’t about me-“

“It is now!”

Russia was standing right in front of America, looking down at him. His chest was rising and falling in great huffs, his body almost shaking from his anger. He wasn’t completely sure where his anger was coming from, nor was he thinking clearly. All he knew was his frustrations and how America kept pushing him.

“I kould look over a few zings, but you never did forrr me. You never left me alone, left what I vanted hidden alone!”

“Russia, please I-“

“Nyet, save it!” He cut America off before he could explain himself or say anything to object Russia’s accusations. There was little to be done now, Russia thought to himself. If America wanted to keep trying to make things better, he would keep pushing him away.

Everything doesn't have to fit how he sees the world, there are some things he doesn't need to get wrapped up in.

"How am I supposed to trrrust someone who keeps zings away frrrom me? Especially when zey starrrt to involve me!"

America bit his lip and looked down. No. No, he didn't want to remember.

"You always tell me to open up, and instead of leaving me to my own secrrrets and prrroblems, you decided to just barge rrright in like you always do! Trrrying to rrrip off my bandages?! How vould you like it!?"

Russia saw his angered reflection starring back at him from America's sunglasses.

"In fact," He growled. "Why don't ve see rrright now!?"

In one swift movement, Russia tore off America's glasses.

Sound was suddenly gone from the world as time seemed to slow down. America gasped audibly and stumbled back with terror filling his eyes. Russia blinked and his eyes grew just as wide. He could feel his anger drain from him, replaced with confusion and fear. His hands trembled as his right one held the sunglasses that America wore at all times. The reason why was now staring right at him.

America's black eyes.

His dark, deep, black eyes.

America was frozen in place. His feet had suddenly been grabbed by the floor and was forced to stay. Stay right there, staring at Russia who was frozen right in front of him. Panic rose into his throat, and tears started to form in his eyes.

"Ame?" Russia managed out in a gasp. He didn't know what he was seeing. Where these some contacts, a-a prank? Anything but what his gut was telling him. His eyes, they. They were. What were they?

After he spoke, the floor let go of America. He glanced at the door

and dashed over to it.

“Amerrrica, Amerrrica vait!”

Russia’s voice was muted to America. Everything was. The sound of the roaring wind, the creaking of the wood as he ripped the door from its icy hold. The cold air as it rushed into the room, the small flakes of snow that pelted his exposed skin, he didn’t feel any of it. What he felt was fear. Fear, and the desperate need to run away.

Russia snapped out of his frozen stance and dropped the sunglasses on the floor as he ran to the open doorway. The small figure of America was fading into the snow, the only slightly visible part of him the darker clothing he wore. Russia knew he would lose him in the storm if he didn’t go after him. The cold will kill him. The snow would burry him. He would be lost to everyone.

He didn’t want to lose anyone else.

“AMERRRICA!”

His voice echoed in the wind, circling America as the snow engulfed his sight. He looked around, trying to see something, anything. A road, a landmark, anything. But as he spun around all he saw was white. White, disorientating white. He had been scared of the dark, of the black that filled his eyes. Now that he was surrounded by white, he was even more terrified.

Mist clouded his vision as well as he huffed, creating a ring around him as he still spun around trying to desperately spot something. Whatever to tell him where he was and where he could go.

How could Russia do that?

His hands held his head, hoping to feel the sides of his sunglasses. The cold air bit at his fingertips, the soles of his feet, his arms, his neck, anything that wasn’t covered with clothing. It burned, burned so much. He didn’t feel it. He didn’t care to.

“AMERRRICA!”

Russia looked around him trying to see a figure in the distance. He

was following the footprints as best as he could, but the snow kept stinging his eyes, forcing tears to fall down his cheeks and freeze against his skin. He was used to it and was annoyed by its persistence. He grasped his coat around him tightly, holding America's jacket close to him. Saying he was worried would be an understatement. The tracks he was following were made with bare feet. America had run out with nothing but a t-shirt and jeans in what was definitely -24˚C (~-11˚F) with this wind. He had ten minutes at most. Enough time to get lost. Enough time to be trapped until the winter was gone.

Their pounding hearts were as loud as the hollowing wind.

"AMERRRICA! WHERRRE ARRRE YOU!"

The voice traveled for what seemed like miles. It in-stowed fear in America. He choked on the cold air rushing his lungs, scraping against the soft tissue. It chilled him from the inside, as it worked its way in from the outside. As his adrenaline started to wear itself out, the heat from the snow burning his skin started to become apparent to him. He shivered, hugging his chest as tight as he could. The world seemed to sway, but he couldn't tell if that was actually happening or not when all he saw was white.

He started coughing violently, his vision darkening for a moment. He felt a warm liquid rise in his throat, the heat right next to the piercing cold almost sending his body into shock. He suddenly seized up and stumbled into the snow. The top powdered layer flew into the air and was gone in a second, taken away by the wind. The heavier snow, the strong packed kind, crunched under his weight, swallowing him and forcing the cold to claim him once more.

Oh, how the cold can burn.

America struggled to stand, his arms shaking violently from the effort. The snow pelted him, needles stabbing with every move. He grunted, crying out from the pain, wishing for it to stop. His cries were choked out, a gurgling sound coming out instead. Air suddenly was cut off and he started choking. With a painful force of effort, he puked out what was caught in his throat. Tears stung his eyes, the liquid allowing more cold to attack them. Through a blurry vision,

he seen a blotch of black splattered, contrasting the deep white.

“No, no, no, no, no, no.” America shook his head, staring down at the black mess. He feared another one of his episodes was coming again. “No, no, not here. Not here, please.”

“AMERRRICA! PLEASE, WHERE ARRRE YOU!”

Russia’s voice was closer. He can't let him see him, he can't let him hear him, not after already seeing his eyes. Fear flowed through his veins faster once more, allowing America to push past the pain of the cold long enough to stand. The cold acted as chains, trying to pull him back under. He forced his leg forward, his muscles feeling stiff. Needles ran up and down his legs, through his arms and hitting the hardest where the snow had gathered on him. His body trembled, his teeth chattering, his grunts of pain drowned out by the wind. One foot forward. Then another. Don’t fall. Keep walking. Keep going. Go where? It doesn’t matter. Just go.

Go.

But the cold. The cold it hurt. It was draining him. Maybe if he laid down. No! Must keep going. Can't stop.

If he laid down, he feared he may not get back up.

The trail was starting to fill as the snow kept falling, the running pattern slowly getting fainter and fainter. Russia cant lose him out here. If he’s out here any longer, he’s going to be in some serious trouble. The cold up here causes dangerously bad frostbite. But that will be the least of his problems if he doesn’t find him. He could very well freeze to death.

Russia came upon the spot where America had fallen down. He bent down next to the disturbed snow and made sure there were no traces of blood or any sign that he was hurt. When he saw the small spray of black liquid he paused. For a moment he thought that was ink or something other. Then he remembered back at the park, months prior. The black liquid. He had almost forgotten about that. But when he had first seen it, Canada ran off with him. It was trouble, Russia recognized that much. This added to the reasons of

why he needed to find America now.

“AMERRRICA!” His voice was strained, stinging from the cold. He stood and started pushing through the wind, keeping his focus on the trail. He had struggled to keep going from here, apparent with the tracks. They were spread apart, stumbling and chaotic.

The cold wind blew into his face and he shielded his eyes with his hand. In the snow, he spotted drops of that black liquid. He had to be going the right way then.

It felt like ages, forever before he came upon another sign of struggles. By the handprints and body impression, he had fallen again. The black liquid was splattered everywhere, tainting the snow. It trailed off, eerily resembling a blood trail. The snow marks didn’t show any footprints this time, it looked more like he was dragged through the snow.

Russia tried his best to run, to make sure that nothing had gotten him. He suddenly was reminded of the horror stories he was told as a kid, monsters and other creatures lurking in the winter. He didn’t want to revert back to such a childish manner but he couldn’t think of anything else. It was all too surreal for him, this might have well been the start of another scary story.

His foot hit something and he stopped. He squinted his eyes and seen the snow lightly piled up over something. There were bits of dark under spots of white, a mix of red screaming out against the pale colors.

“Amerrrica!”

Russia got down onto his knees and began to brush away the fresh powdered snow that had gathered on the limp body. America was alive, Russia could see that, but he was shivering intensely, the black liquid trailing out of his mouth, his eyes shut tight. He waisted no time in picking him up and wrapping his coat around him, trying to shut out the cold. They had to get home, America needed warmth.

This was his fault, wasn’t it?

No. No time for pity, get what needs to be done now. You can worry about that later.

"Rush.." America breathe out, barely keeping his eyes open.

"It's okay Amerrrica, I'm herrre!" Russia shouted against the wind. As he moved he opened his own jacket to try and press him up against his own body for some form of heat. "I'll get you inside, don't worry I got you."

"No, " came a weak whine. America wanted to get away, but he had no strength to do it. The cold was eating away at him, his fingers and feet were numb. His head spun, the world feeling light.

"I'm sorry, " he whispered, the wind almost drowning him out. His eyes closed and his shivering got weaker.

"Amerrrica? Nyet, nyet! Don't you darrre die on me now!"

Russia was running with the strength of the wind pushing him forward, but the snow keeping his strides stiff. He aimed for his own foot prints, hoping to get home faster. The cold had started to affect his own bare hands, but he could care less. It was America he needed to worry about.

By some miracle, he got home quicker than he estimated. As soon as he made it through his doorway, he slammed the door shut with his boot and ran to the couch. He carefully set America down on the cushions, throwing the coat off of him and onto the floor. His skin was cold to the touch, his breathing was hitching and shallow.

“Come on Amerrrica. You perrrsistent little shit, I’m not letting you go.” Russia ran to the thermostat and quickly turned the heat up. His mind was racing as he tried to remember how to help with frostbite. No, Russia stop and think. Check to see how damaging it is.

His skin was cold, the soles of his feet an unhealthy deep bright red, almost matching his own skin. The red hue graduated up his ankles, as well with his hands and wrists. They don’t seem immediately horrible, it was more frostnip from what he could see. Now what?

Clothes.

The fabric was wet from the melted snow, he needed to get out of those. He took off America's shirt, tossing it to the ground. His chest was sinking and rising steadily now, chipping away the worry that ate away Russia. He was still kicking. His pants were dampened too and as Russia was working on undoing his belt he realized what he was doing. His movements halted and his face grew warmer than the air around him.

No. This doesn't affect him in any way. He's trying to help a friend. That's all.

Still, Russia shut his eyes and took off America's jeans throwing it behind him. Wet or not, America was keeping his boxers on. . . . But he had to take off all wet clothing, or else he could cause permanent damage to the skin tissues. It was part of the first aid he had learned as a kid. You have to make sure you can keep the person warm, for if you try rewarming then expose them to the cold, it could cause irreversible damage.

Flustered, Russia kept his eyes shut and quickly took off America's underwear and dropped it to the floor. Exposed to the warm air would help him a little, but he needed to be wrapped in the warmth.

Russia grabbed some blankets from upstairs and made a nest for America to be curled up in, hiding his body to the relief of the bigger country.

Warmth, dry blankets, no cold. What else was he missing? Right. The frostbitten areas needed to be rewarmed. Slowly, as to not stun the nerves. Warm water does that. Hopefully it will be warm.

He didn't want to leave America alone for long periods of time, so Russia hurriedly started the water with the appropriate temperature, thankfully, and ran back downstairs. It was then he noticed he still had his boots and jacket on. He got out of those, tossing them to the ground along with the rest of everything he had taken off.

It wasn’t too hard carrying him up to the bathroom, he kept him wrapped up in a few blankets. When he got to the tub, he held onto America the best he could while shutting off the water. And of course, he shut his eyes while stripping America of the blankets and setting him into the water. When he had to open his eyes he made sure to keep his line of sight above America’s waist.

The house was very warm, the air rushing through the heating vents and filling the room. America would be okay, he told himself. He will be fine. Why he hadn't woken up yet was another question. Perhaps he was exhausted. Or collapsed from the cold. Whatever the reason was, America would wake up.

The idea and thoughts of sleep, however, made Russia realize he was running on fumes. The whole ordeal had exhausted him as well and doing everything as he was as fast as he was wore him out. He was tired. He needed a break. He needed sleep.

He sat down with his back against the tub. He didn’t want to leave his side, just in case he fell into the water and couldn’t get back up on his own. That was the reason he told himself, anyway.

Russia looked over to America, his face relaxed and normal. He remembered seeing those eyes, which brought back faint fuzzy memories of seeing them before. It was short and clips of the past, but enough to tell him that this wasn’t the first time he had seen his eyes. But he must have been drunk, cause he hadn't remembered it until now.

“Black eyes.” Russia chuckled to himself. “You’rrde full of surrrprrrises, arrren’t you?”

America did not answer. But that was okay. He was okay. Everything was okay. It's okay. You can let go now, Russia. Sleep. You need it.

Russia’s eyes fluttered shut as he allowed sleep to overtake him.

**((How about that? First, I fucking uploaded in under my usual 2-week thing, second America didn’t die! But believe me, Russia still has plenty of questions. And the storm isn’t over**

**yet.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Russia Is Even More Confused

**Narrators POV**

Waking up alive was not what America expected.

Neither was waving up naked in a bathtub for that matter.

When he came to, he thought he was in a bed for how warm he was. But when he splashed water onto his face, he realized where he was. In Russia's bathroom? What the fuck was he doing here? How did he get here?
Is that Russia?

America noticed Russia sleeping, his back against the side of the tub. Why was he here? Wait, he can't be here! His eyes, his-his sunglasses! He saw his eyes! He ran away. Out into the snow, he-he fell down, and he couldn't get back up. It was so cold. He couldn't see. He felt so tired. Russia, he picked him up and. . .

When he heard splashing, Russia shot his head up and looked right at America. He was slightly startled when he saw his black eyes again, almost expecting to see his sunglasses as he always did. But it was only momentary.

"Arrre you okay?"

America looked down, raising his hands from the water. They were tingling and as he moved it hurt. He grimaced at the feeling, his face scrunching up.

"It hurts."

"It vill forrr little while. I kan grrrab some pain killerrrs," Russia stood up and walked over to the door. "Is vater still varrrm?"

"Yeah."

He must have not been asleep for long then if the water was still

warm. But then again, any water that was warmer than the outside temperature must have been heaven to him. He'll have to check just to be sure.

“Good. Stay therrre until I kome back,” he left in a hurry, breathing out a sigh of relief. It was so weird, having America bare ass naked a few inches from him. It could have been the normal weird, or it could not have bothered him at all. But no. This felt different. He even felt the slight temptation to look down. Which he ignored strongly.

Russia returned with the painkillers and a glass of water and handed them to America. He kept his eyes averted, staring at the wall as if it was the most interesting thing he has seen all day. Don't look below the waist, don't look below the waist.

“Thank you,” America said after he swallowed the pill, setting the glass down. Russia grunted his response and sat back down with his back against the tub again.

Silence fell between them, the only sounds the rushing air from the heater and the water moving as America sifted.

God, it was so hot.

Russia opened his mouth to say something but the words died in his throat. What could he say? In a fit of rage, he revealed what America wanted hidden. Sure, he had done something similar to him but does that make it right to do the same? He didn’t like it when it happened to him, why would he want to do the same to another country? Especially if it was America.

“I’m sorrrry,” He finally said.

America looked up at him and traced the side of his head where the glasses used to be with his finger. His muscle felt sore, and a little stiff but he no longer felt as cold as he did before. The warm air and heat from the water felt so nice.

When there was no response, Russia felt a twinge of pain in his heart. He messed up bad, didn’t he?

“If its any konsolation,” he cleared his throat and avoided eye contact again. “I um. I zink zey arrre um . . . nice.”

A small smile curled on America’s lips, and he remembered back when Drunk Russia had said they were weird, and he liked weird. Of course, then he would say whatever was on his mind, and now he is muddling what he meant. Russia would never openly admit to liking something about him, that’s too embarrassing. But America still knew.

“You’re not scared of them?” America still had his doubts, though. When you are drunk, anything sounds fun.

Russia shook his head no.

“Why?”

“Bekause, vell. People fearrred me forrr something I didn’t have kontrrrol over. Why should I do the same vith you?” He looked up at America, surprised to see him smiling at him. Such a wide genuine smile, with the formation of tears in the corners of his eyes. That smile, it was much more pleasant then his usual smirk. It was kind of . . . well . . . cute.

“And zey rrreally arrren’t zat skarrry,” Russia looked down into his hands, blushing at the thought.

The smile on America’s face grew a little more.

“Well, I think you are-“ he was cut off by a cough, his body hurting with each jolt he made. His hands swung out of the water and gripped the sides of the tub with a death grip. His throat felt sore, and his stomach hurt. It ached from hunger, he recognized, but also he felt like something was caught in his throat.

“Arrre you okay? What’s wrrrong?” Russia jumped to a panic.

“Im fine,” America’s voice was horse, but otherwise he was telling the truth. “I’m hungry, though.”

Russia nodded, and immediately got up to go to the kitchen. America had been preparing some snacks for them before . . .

Everything. He hoped it wasn't something cold, it would have gone bad by then. Thankfully, it was just a sandwich.

The painkillers were slowly kicking in, but not fast enough for America. He grimaced at the throbbing pain that was in his hands and feet. At least he could still feel them, he thought to himself trying to wiggle his toes. How long had he been out there? He was thankful he had some experience with the cold to be able to handle it a little better than countries like Mexico. Does that count as calling him out?

When Russia returned with the food for both of them, America had grabbed a towel, dried himself off, and drained the tub. But he had grabbed the blanket and was sitting next to the vent with the blanket over it a little and around him to create a warm pocket of air. He also tied a washcloth around his eyes, trying to hide them still.

"Amerrrica."

He heard the door shut and Russia walk in.

"You had to stay in varrrm vater."

America kept his head turned away from Russia and the blanket as a makeshift hood. Russia didn't immediately notice anything off, just thought that he was trying to cover his entire body.

"I'm fine. I got a blanket and the vent right by me."

"Nyet, you kan't be too close to vents." Russia set the sandwiches down on the kitchen sink and dragged America away from the vent. In doing so, he had noticed the cloth tied around his face. "Why did you tie zis arrround yourrr eyes?"

He saw America frown and let out a sigh. America knew that Russia didn't mind, at least that's what he hoped. That little bit of doubt was enough for him to want to hide them again. Even if that meant he couldn't see.

"Americrra, I told you zey don't skarrre me." Russia reached for the cloth and tried to pull it off of him.

“You are just saying that.” America pulled his head away, securing it with his hands. Russia was drunk when he saw them the first time. Of course, he would say he liked them, and now he’s just trying to be nice. They are trapped in this stupid house, he probably wants to make it bearable.

Russia knew America enough to know what was really going on. He had studied his mannerisms, even before they really started hanging out. So, he pulled America close to him, the only barrier being the warm blanket, and set his chin on top of his head. “I think they are weird, yeah. But I liked weird things.”

America’s eyes widened a little hearing those words again.

“I think you’rrre skarrred of zem.”
A small cry was suddenly caught in America’s throat and he buried his head under Russia’s, grabbing his sweater tightly with shaky hands. His body reacted before his mind understood the revaluation. Tears started to fall slowly as he stifled his hitching breath and small whines, trying desperately to silence his crying. Russia felt America melt into him and he wrapped his arms around him tenderly, slowly stroking his black lightly to try and console him.

Russia was right, America realized. He was scared. No. Terrified of his eyes.

They stayed like that until America stopped crying, Russia never loosening his grip on his comrade. He knew he needed to be comforted, as America had done for Russia countless times before. Yes, he regretted tearing off his sunglass, but deep down he was relieved he did. America could finally face this with someone, he found out what America was hiding, and now he can make up for the times where he needed someone to comfort him and America came to his aid. Plus, it was nice to be able to hold him close as he was. It reassured him, knowing he was safe, he was okay in his arms.

It was nice having a small moment of peace. But nothing like that can fully exist for America. He had taken off the washcloth just as he started to calm down and decided to pull away from Russia to

ask for some clothes. Before he could say anything, he coughed sharply and covered his mouth with his hand. He must be getting a cold or something, Russia thought until he looked down at him to ask how he was feeling.

A small trickle of a black substance came from America's mouth and had been splattered on his closed fist.

"No."

"Amerrrica?" Russia gasped his eyes widen as he remembered the park and the black liquid in the snow.

America pushed himself away quickly, wrapping himself in the blanket tightly and crawling over to the toilet to prepare to start hurling. He didn't want to make a mess of Russia's bathroom, not after everything else he had just had to put him through.

Knowing that America looked like he knew what to do, Russia thought he could at least help him be as comfortable as he could. That big bulky blanket probably is just getting in the way for him. But he needed to stay warm.

His sweater was warm and had a thick lining on the inside. It was part of the reason he was slightly overheating. But it was a sweater he knew would cover up the hickies made by America. . . His health is more important than his pride.

America awaited for the gut-wrenching painful black vomit that would soon arise. All he managed to do till then was cough up a few droplets. That was weird.  When he coughs up the black stuff, it's like a two-minute warning. But there wasn't anything. Maybe it was just leftover stuff from when he had a partial one in the blizzard.

Russia tapped his shoulder, his sweater in hand. His ushanka was pulled down to the right more in an effort to still keep those marks hidden. America turned around and seen what he was offering. It was better than getting the black stuff on the blanket, he thought. Plus, Russia's sweaters and shirts were oversized on him so it would cover him up enough, too.

He took the sweater and Russia looked away so he could put it on.

“Dehsadihsade:nih. (You can turn around.)”

“What has zat?” Russia asked, risking a glance over his shoulder. He did keep his eye level up just in case he hadn't been fully covered. Lucky for him, and his tendency to blush harder around him now, America did have the sweater on. But he had his hand around his throat as if he had something caught in it and it was a reflex.

“De’getaë'. (I can't talk.)" He said again, panic rising in his voice. Oh god, it was still happening! He didn’t want to have this in front of him. If his eyes weren’t bad enough, now he was going to be speaking a foreign language that he wouldn’t recognize! All of this is too much at once, it can’t happen, it cant happen!

Russia narrowed his eyes in thought. The dialect sounded familiar. Each langue and how it is spoken is unique and identifiable, especially since Russia had spent a lot of time figuring them out. This one was familiar but he had heard it awhile ago.

“Ëtšyanitgë't, ëhsajano:wä:t! (Leave, hurry and run!)” America began to push Russia away, his strength weak and shaky. It barely nudged Russia anywhere, and the unfamiliar dialect confused him. He couldn’t understand his words but knew he was trying to push him away.

He grabbed his wrists and held them suspended in the air. America was breathing heavily, his chest rising and slowing at an increased rate, his pulse was matching the speed of a lawnmower, his lip trembled and his body was turned inwards again. He was terrified of something, whatever it was Russia couldn’t imagine what.

“Amerrrica, what is wrrrong?” He asked, trying to get him to focus on his face in front of him. America blinked a few times before focusing on Russia’s face that was a foot in front of his own. His colored face, his concerned eyes with the lines of worry that always where there, the ushanka’s fur that hid most of his face, even the hickies now visible on his neck. America focused on it all trying to steady his heart and his breathing. Panic does nothing. He will not panic in front of Russia. He is not a scared little country anymore.

“Ëgadögweta’ (I’ll be okay),” he paused when he remembered he couldn’t understand him. If he can't speak it maybe he could think of something. Sign language? Charades? He cant write, he writes the language he gets stuck speaking. But he hadn’t written down anything about the languages in forever. He wanted to forget, so he stopped. Destroyed the journal he kept them in, whatever to forget.

When America spoke again, Russia didn’t understand it any more than before. But what he realized was that he had heard that language before. In the caves, it was one of the languages spoken. If it was the kids or the other people he had overheard in there he wasn’t too sure. But why was America speaking in that instead of English?

Then to make everything even more confusing for him, America suddenly started to freak out. He dove at the floor, Russia jumping out of the way. He pounded on the tiles, screaming at the floor as if it did something to him.

“What the hell are you doing?” Russia raised a brow, utterly baffled by this sudden outburst. America paused at his voice, froze in his place staring up at Russia. Then his expression of fear turned into one of eternal rage. He shouted in that foreign language and practically attacked Russia, grabbing for his neck.

“What the hell- Amerrrica stop!” He got to shout before instinct took over. He was used to being attacked, a sad thing to be used to, but none the less he quickly got a hold of America and pinned him to the floor. He knelt over him, trying to control his own panic. America was screaming, angered shouts and kept trying to punch him, his legs kicking and flailing.

“Amerrrica, stop calm down!”

He responded in angered shouts and words Russia couldn’t understand. What had made America go from worried and silent to angry and screaming, he had no clue. He didn’t know if it was something he did, or what he even could have done to have America try to attack him. Whatever it was, America was determined to keep fighting. He kicked and kept trying to get him off of him. Then with a lucky swift move, he kneed Russia in the

crotch.

A sharp red hot spike went through Russia and he let go of America, doubling over from the pain. America, now freed, jumped up and dashed out of the room. With tears stinging the corners of his eyes, Russia lifted himself up and watched him run out of the doorway. A sudden flashback made him think he ran out into the snow once more, the ranging white inferno of death, but he blinked and seen the hallway instead.

“Zat mother fucker,” Russia growled through gritted teeth. Then he got up to chase after him.

Downstairs, America stumbled onto the floor. His legs and feet felt like they were set aflame as he stepped, and when he hit the hard floor the fire spread to his entire left side. But he couldn’t stop, no not now. Not when they were still on his tail.

“Amerrrica!” Russia shouted.
The voice became distorted in America’s ears and he heard a taunting voice whisper his name in his ear. He whipped his head around to try and find the unknown voice but found nothing. Russia’s house, what? What had they done to it? As he fled from the clutches of a hooded figure upstairs, he hadn’t noticed the state of the house. It was practically in ruins. The couch he had remembered seeing not that long ago was torn, the stuffing leaking out like a wound, broken and turned over. The rest of the furniture was no different, thrown about, smashed in pieces. It looked as if a bear had gotten inside and attacked everything in sight. Not only that, but the wall had also been torn into, the beams showing and decent sized chunks of it gone. The snow raged with a furry that made him shiver. Vines had grown inside, browned and withered from the winter but remnants of it still there, tangling themselves in the mess.

“In time, what once was will take back what was stolen.”

America got up and ran again. He didn’t know where to go. He couldn’t stay here, but he couldn’t go outside. He glanced out a broken window and seen the storm. No, that wasn’t an option.

He shivered again.

“You mustn’t forget, or you’ll be doomed to follow.”

He felt a tap on his shoulder and he spun around only to be faced with black. A small gasped escaped his mouth as he turned back around but all he saw around him was the pitch black. No crumbling house, no bitter cold nothing. There was nothing. But yet, he could tell, no, he could feel something there.

A small laugh came from the darkness around him, a deep male voice that sounds oddly familiar.

“Ëseadodahsi’! (Show yourself!) America hissed, spinning around to try and spot something. He stumbled to a halt after he made himself dizzy.

“Don’t ignore your past, or it will become your future.” The voice that had sounded taunting before now turned to a panic. The change in tone confused America, but he decided to worry about that later.

“Si:gwa:h! (Go away!)” He shouted into the darkness.

The male laughter grew louder.

“Amerrrica, kome back!” Russia’s voice broke through the darkness, echoing faintly but then was snuffed out as quickly as it broke through.

“Ëswatö:da:t neh Otha:yo:nih! (Listen to the Wolf!)” A child spoke up, sounding right next to America. He looked down in time to see what was the mist like outline of a child dissipate into nothing.

The laughter grew closer, centering right in front of him. America squinted his eyes in hopes to see who the figure was. He could hear the tapping of heeled boots hitting a hard floor, the sound of chains and a strange rumbling. As the footsteps grew closer panic suddenly rose in his chest. Unsure why, but those sounds and the man’s voice, they forced a pit to form in his stomach. He felt a memory push its way to the front of his mind, one filled with pain and he pressed his hands against his head.

“Hë’ëh, hë’ëh, hë’ëh, hë’ëh! (No, no, no, no!)” He screamed, not wanting anything to do with it. Screams filled his ears, gunshots, and memories of fire.

“You will break your mind again if you don’t-“

“Don’t listen to me.” The man interrupted the disembodied female voice.

“Hë’ëh, hë’ëh, hë’ëh, hë’ëh. (No, no, no, no.)” America shook his head, pressing down harder in an effort to drown out the clearing memory. He doesn’t want to remember, he cant remember. He cant afford to remember, he doesn’t want to. It's gone, it's in the past, let him move on.

He screamed internally, screaming for everything to stop. He collapsed onto his knees, his arms shaking and holding his head even as his strength started to hurt. He didn’t want to remember.

“Agö'e:së, agö’e:së hë’ëh! (Please, please no!)”

The sounds stopped.

The screaming, the yelling, the crackling of fire, the sounds of war and destruction.

Just the boots and chains remained.
Slowly, America lifted his head. They got closer, more centered and focused. Everything else around him was unnaturally quiet.

In the darkness gleamed something golden. America leaned and narrowed his eyes, trying to see more of the small pinpoints of light. A faint silhouette was slowly outlined as the man slowed its walking towards him. He could make out broad shoulders, the gleaming of possible metal objects on its torso and what he could only assume was a cane of some kind just barely visible.

“Ša’da:de’? (Who are you?)” His voice whimpered.

The figure laughed, his shoulders visible moving with each one. Two eyes flashed a yellow, glowing against the pitch black. It leaned forward slowly, a clear smile on his face. Then in a whisper,

he said slowly, “you already know.”

The paused footsteps turned into a sprint and a red figure charged at him. America screamed, using his arms to shield his face. Hands grabbed his shoulders, pulling him towards them. He screamed again, trying to break free. He pulled on the invisible hands, leaning away and digging his nails into the attacker’s skin.

“Amerrrica, Amerrrica stop!”

In a blink of an eye, America was thrown back into reality. The light came back to him, blinding him for a few moments. The sound of rushing air from a heater, the wind howling against the house, the beating of his own heart, the heavy panting of someone in front of him. Once his eyes focused, he recognized the face of Russia in front of him. His ushanka was crooked, his eyes widen and his mouth ajar, opening a little with each heavy breath. As America looked around he realized the house wasn’t abandoned. Everything was as it had been, in the same place Russia always likes it.

He was hallucinating again and didn’t recognize it.

America looked down and seen he was digging his nails into Russia’s wrists. He let go immediately, quickly apologizing. It didn’t come out in English but Russia understood the gist.

“It's fine, you’rrre okay, I’m used to it. I mean,” Russia paused and tried to correct himself when he saw the look of hurt on America’s face. “It didn’t hurt, you didn’t hurt me.”

Russia decided now wasn’t the time to bring up being kicked in the balls by him in his effort to escape. But he wanted to know what had just happened. When he came downstairs he had found America screaming at the air around him, and physically restraining him then wasn’t a smart idea which he now knew. Sleepwalkers shouldn’t be woken up, something he remembered being told. Having no other reference for whatever America was doing, he decided to stay hidden around the doorframe and keep a discreet eye on him to make sure he didn’t hurt himself.  When he fell to the ground and stopped moving, he figured it was safe to try and ‘wake him up’ so to speak.

“Kan you talk now?”

“Di’gwa:h (I don’t know,)” America sighed and shut his mouth.

That would be a no.

“Arrre you okay?” Russia decided to ask yes or no questions only.

America hesitated but then shook his head no. Of course, he wasn’t okay. He was just in the bathroom with Russia with what then was the closest to fine he could have gotten, then suddenly the world around him crumbled and he saw Russia disappear into the floor, swallowed up by the boards. He screamed but then where Russia sat was a hooded figure. He had faint memories of seeing someone like that but had quickly stuffed that down as soon as they arose again.

“We’ve tried to get you to listen to us.” It had said in multiple voices.

America had still clawed at the ground until it spoke again.

“You continue to ignore and hurt my people. Now your brother does the same.”

He had stopped and slowly turned to the figure close to the wall. It knelt down, its robe opening only to reveal nothing but black.

“He will suffer the same as you if nothing is done.”

America had snapped then. It didn’t matter to him if he didn’t know which brother the figure was referring to, he wouldn’t let anyone threaten them and get away with it. He tackled the figure, going for its throat. But they had easily overpowered him, hissing into his ears, “if nothing is fixed we will fix it ourselves. No matter the cost.”

“Amerrrica, brrreath.”

He shook his head and brought himself back to the present. He hadn’t realized he had begun to hyperventilate until Russia spoke up. He began his counting to try and calm himself down, he didn’t

want to start panicking again. He wasn't sure if it had anything to do with the hallucinations or not, but he didn't want to find out.

Once his breathing was steady, Russia calmed down, too. He was scared America would attack again, or run back outside. He wanted to grab and hold him close again, to make sure that he would be safe but he didn't know if that is what America needed then.

"Is zerrre anything I kan do?" He decided to ask in the easiest way possible.

America shrugged, not knowing if there is anything to do. He didn't want to be bothered with the disappointment of not being able to speak his own language, so he didn't even attempt to speak. And any question he has? No. He didn't want the answers. He didn't want to know if he was attacking an imaginary figure, trying to strangle them, or . . .

"Arrre you cold?"

The house was warm, but the cold air sinks so the hard floor was admittedly colder than what America would have thought it would be. It was probably caused by his sensitivity on his legs and feet. He tugged down the sweater to cover himself up more and decided that the best way to answer that question was to crawl over to Russia and climb onto his lap. Once he was comfortable, he hid his face in Russia's chest and nodded slightly.

It felt nice, Russia will admit to that. There was just something about holding America close to him in a welcome embrace, feeling his body pressed against his own, knowing he was safe. It was calming, feeling his steady breathing, looking down at his relaxing face. Everything was content. But they couldn't stay here sitting on the floor, America needed proper warmth still. He didn't want to risk anything.

Deciding on what to do, Russia stood up cradling America in his arms. America wrapped his arms around Russia's neck to steady himself but otherwise didn't move. Russia had started to move towards the couches in the living room but then America whined and shook his head. Not the couches. Russia remembered him

complaining about sleeping on the couch. Maybe he can just have him lay in his bed for a while. He can sleep on the floor.

America didn't whine when Russia moved upstairs. He seemed content with the unspoken decision and allowed himself to be set down on the bed. He let Russia gather all the blankets he could, including the one in the bathroom and piled them on top of him. Which left Russia with a pillow, a small worn-out stuffed mat, and a thin blanket. Which America wasn't having.

He tried to whine his complaint but Russia hadn't heard him over him clearing things off his floor. Some stuff included some dirty bandages and other things similar, neither of them wanted to talk about it then, though.

"You know, " America rubbed his arm nervously but was happy to be speaking English. "I would be warmer if you slept next to me."

Russia dropped the small box he was holding and spun around. "W-w-what?"

He shrugged, looking down to try and get some extra vulnerable look points. Whatever got Russia into bed with him. He would work on the extra stuff another time, maybe not when he was sore from the frostbite situation.

With some consideration, America was thought to be right. Russia wanted to make sure America was safe, warm and won't disappear on him again. Even if that meant just laying by him for body heat purposes only. That’s what he told himself anyway. One can't rely on warm blankets and warm air alone, you know. Plus the vents turn off and on occasionally, and in those time periods what if America does get cold? If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.

Russia left the pillow and blanket on the floor and climbed onto the bed with America scooting over just the slightest for him. He stayed sitting up, working on gathering most of the blankets around America to make sort of a nest for him. "Sleep. You look exhausted."

America felt it and knew that he was right. But damn it, if he

doesn’t get to snuggle with Russia then he won't sleep. So he wiggled under the blankets then pulled Russia down with him.

"Amerrrica what arrre you doing?"

"Shhh. In order for me to actually be warm, you have to be next to me." America explained grabbing Russia's arms and pulling them around himself, pressing his back against Russia's chest and decided being a small spoon was easier with Russia's size.

Behind him, Russia was blushing furiously and was refusing to admit to himself he was. He felt America exhale deeply and relax, melting into his hold. He grabbed his hands and held onto them, his small hands barely able to wrap around them fully. This made Russia want to panic, but he stuffed that down further. No. Not happening.

“Don’t worry, no homo man.” America joked before slightly curling up more to sleep.

“Da,” Russia huffed, getting comfortable himself. “No homo.”

They both knew that couldn’t be a full truth.

((**Even if Russia will be a little shit about it still. Heyo everybody! Have your daily dose of gayness, as Russia gets his own as well! Haha, that bastard is gonna be tough and so deep in denial’s ass America is gonna be jealous. Either way, the next chapter has one of my favorite characters in it and I can't wait cause oh my god this smol bean is just the best AHHHHH! ….did I just get excited about my own chapter? Wow, I'm obnoxious.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Long Over Due

**Narrator's POV**

"So, you don't know?"

America shook his head.

"What about hallucinations?"

"Those are recent. Cryptic shit, I usually don't understand them until later."

Russia nodded. The two were sitting at the kitchen table, in what could be called their normal spots for when they were left alone. Sitting across from each other, America kept his head lowered. His eyes were still showing, black as ever. His sunglasses that had been dropped by Russia were broken in his frantic rushing to save his life. He was happy Russia wasn't scared of them, at least that's what he keeps telling him, but he couldn't shake the feeling that he was lying. An annoying underlying feeling to have, but one that kept persisting.

"Does anyone else know about zem?"

"The hallucinations or my eyes?"

"Both."

He rubbed his hand over his mouth, his tongue feeling dry. "Well, hallucinations, you and my family. I guess they found out the hard way, I may have accidentally attacked them a . . . Few . . . Times."

Russia nodded once more.

"And my family knows about them, of course. But outside that, you and Germany. You two found out by accident." He mumbled the word 'accident' as if it wasn't the correct word to use in that sentence.

Following along wasn't hard for Russia, what he had trouble understanding was why certain memories that seemed key for him were fuzzy. He had brought up the caves again, and he saw his face contort in confusion as if he had forgotten the whole ordeal. When he went further into detail, America suddenly went blank. Then persisted that they talked about something else. It was clearer than to him that America clearly wanted to forget. He always ran away from the issues, getting into other people's business maybe to forget his own? To distract himself? The exact reason wasn't entirely clear, but Russia managed to get a good grasp on it.

"Why do you zink you have zem?"

America shrugged. "I thought it was because I didn't really have an original culture. I mean, I take ideas and traditions from other countries, and everyone else has their own stuff. I'm a melting pot, remember? But then vomiting that black stuff and everything else? It feels more like a punishment."

He crossed his arms and lowered himself onto the table, almost curling up into a ball. Then he glanced up at Russia. "Why? Why do you think I have them?"

Russia blinked, not ready to answer such a question. His first instinct was to suggest what he had thought: America is forcefully forgetting past terrors. But how that correlated with his eyes and the physical responses didn't add up, so he shrugged instead. "I don't know."

He noticed America rub his arms lightly in what looked like a shiver. "Arrre you kold?"

"No. I just got a weird chill down my spine." He explained, telling the truth. Russia had turned down the heat slightly and stopped trying to pile blankets on top of him. So they settled for Russia's big sweater and some extra clothes he could wear, like sweatpants. And since Russia's sweater wasn't covering up his neck, America could clearly see the hickeys he had given him in his drunken stupor.

"How's your neck?" He sat up and leaned against his hand. "They look like they are clearing up, you want me to fix that?~"

"Don't change subject," Russia said flatly, but America noticed him twist his hands around themselves nervous. America smiled at that but decided to file it for later.

"Fine. I mean, it's not like we both gave each other hickies in any sort of heated drunken moment at aaall."

"Shut up."

"Are you absolutely sure you aren't gay?"

"Da."

"Let's get you drunk and test that theory then."

"Nyet. Trrry it and I'll drrropkick you down the stairrrs."

"Oh playing a little rough now are we?~"

Russia let out a low groan and slammed his head on the table. He couldn't win with him. And seeing his full expression as he flirted with him, it did something that Russia didn't want to think about. His eyes were always covered and that helped him deal with his shitty remarks, but just seeing them. They were etched into his head, something about them so mesmerizing. They were different, unique, hypnotizing.

As he peeked through his arms and the fur of his ushanka, he looked at his eyes. They weren't the most magnificent shade of blue that resembled the diamond-like skies, the deepest red of a furious fire, or the green that shimmered as if it were jewels instead of irises. No, they were none of that. They were cold, dark, as endless as the most dangerous black hole. Russia found solace in that seemingly terrifying onyx. He found understanding, forgotten silence, and lost reliability.

America shook away his distracting thoughts and focused back into the now. He had gotten sidetracked with a train of thought that jumped tracks and in the middle of the jump, he noticed Russia. Barely just seen from a small gap, he saw him staring up at him. It caught him off guard, and he jumped slightly and quickly turned his head. Fuck he wasn't mentally prepared for direct eye contact so

suddenly.

"You okay there, Rus?" He laughed nervously, clearing his throat and trying to keep himself together. "Or did I affect you that much?"

"Nyet, you'rrre too dumb forrr zat."

"Nice insult, you are very creative."

"Shut up."

Russia sat back up and rubbed his face. He wanted to get back to talking about his eyes but wasn't too sure what he could say anymore. A lot of the subjects and points he wanted to know, America didn't know or didn't want to talk about it. Then there was the underlying guilt he still felt for tearing off his sunglasses. America dismissed it, telling him it was okay. That he was more relieved that he didn't have to hide it from him anymore. Even with that, doubts were still there.

Then there was a knock on the door.

Both of them sat up straighter and looked at each other confused. Someone was out there?

After almost tripping over each other in a rush to get to the door, and Russia quickly putting his ushanka on America to help hide his eyes, they opened it and the utter confusion was resolved. One of the few countries that can survive any cold with no questions.

"Antarctica?"

The known icy country smiled widely at the two of them, taking off his goggles with his gloved hands. Silently, he waved at the two and pointed inside. Russia stepped out of the way to let him inside.

"What are you doing here? I get that blizzards are your thing but seeking them out is pretty weird." America joked, moving out of the way as Anta brushed the snow off his coat. He gave him a look and rolled his eyes, his silent way of saying "whatever".

Russia took Anta's coat and hung it up for him, kicking some of the

snow that had gathered on the floor back towards the door. He looked over at America to see if there were any signs he was cold or in pain, but he looked to have been okay. He was still confused as to why Anta had stopped by. Normally countries don't visit during the blizzards, even if they can withstand the cold.

"Why arrre you herrre? Not trrrying to be rrrude."

Anta turned to him and signed in Russian, "I'm here because your families wanted to make sure you were okay."

Antarctica couldn't speak verbally, only able to make a few sounds and noises. Those rarely formed words, so he never bothered with that. Instead, he can speak through sign language, in any language that there was for it. The problem with that, some countries' ability with sign language wasn't as good to make non-choppy conversations, so he had his boyfriend, Greenland, with him to help with any translation. Unfortunately, he was busy.

"Ve arrre still alive if zat's what zey meant."

"Who's they?" America asked, adjusting the fur so it wasn't poking his eyes. Between the strands, he was able to see enough to know where everything and everyone was. He just hoped it as still thick enough to cover his eyes.

"Ourrr families, zey vanted to know if ve arrre okay," Russia answered, to which Antarctica nodded. He turned to his satchel and opened it riffling through the random objects he had in there. Canada had asked him to see if he could give him a letter since he couldn't get a message to him through his phone and was worried that he had broken it again. America did have the habit of doing that during his episodes, and he was worried that maybe one had happened. He would have gone himself, but his father and mother didn't want him to leave the house. Not yet, at least.

Being cold countries, Anta and Canada got along quite well. He had been the one to introduce him to Greenland since they had been close friends. So when he asked Anta to check up on his brother and to give him a small care package of sorts, he was happy to help. Walking through a snowstorm was nothing to him, and he happily

embraced the cold. The warmth always made him sick after a while of being in it, so he knew he couldn't stay in Russia's house for long. It was so warm in there he felt as if he would start melting.

"Canada asked me to give this to you," Antarctica signed to America after he handed him the letter. America looked down at it with confusion. Then he was handed another cylinder case, which he immediately recognized. It was his spare glasses case.

"Ah, sweet! Nada, I knew I could count on you!" He exclaimed as he happily took the case and opened it up. Nice wrap around sunglasses brand new with no sign of any persons touching it. "Thanks, Icy bro. I owe you one."

Anta made a small noise of happiness, filing away his IOU for another date. A favor from America is worth a lot.

"It's verrry hot in herrre," Russia set his hand on Anta's shoulder, and he turned him around, "arrre you okay?"

Anta shook his hand for the universal sign of kind of. He was okay, but some cold air would feel much better. He then asked with his hands, "can you open the door a little?"

"Amerrrica, kan you make him something in the kitchen? I don't vant you close to kold."

"Yeah sure Rus." America nodded, putting his glasses on before going to do as he was told. After he read Canada's letter that is.

"Why can't he be by the cold?" Anta asked as Russia opened the door a crack to allow the cold air to rush onto him.

"He vas being dumb and almost got severrre frrrostbite," Russia explained, trying to control his tone of voice to be more carefree. He knew Antarctica wasn't one of the countries who knew about America's eyes, so he wanted to keep everything to a minimum. Which meant acting as if what happened didn't scare him. "His skin will be sensitive forrr a while, so I want to keep him away from the kold."

"The storm seems to be clearing up," Anta signed but then paused as

he got lost in thought. On his walk here, he had noticed the snow calm down and the clouds parted a little before coming closer together and forming almost a hailstorm. The cold of the winter didn't bother him, but the high winds and falling pelts of ice hurt, so he wore jackets and googles to keep his skin and body protected from the elements.

He shook his head to focus. "Maybe in a day or two you can travel out of your house."

Russia nodded, looking out the window. Being disconnected from the world was nice, but he did miss aspects of it after a while. And after his conversations with America, especially how dismissive he was about those caves, he needed to get out of the house. Find those kids again. But beyond that, he realized he had kept America from school. He was used to not showing up cause of storms like this, but America wasn't. He didn't seem concerned at all about it, but he was one who wanted to skip when he could.

The two chatted casual conversations for a while after that, Anta bringing up some funny events that he had heard happened. When one can't talk, they tend to hear everything. But he got to his siblings after Russia asked about them. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had a small altercation because of something to do with teasing, Belarus is keeping them at bay, and they hadn't heard anything from their other siblings. He had to stop by their place as a small checkpoint of sorts to rest up.

"I got fooood!"

"Kover yourrrself up in blanket, doorrr is open."

The three sat by the front door, America resembling a tent, and ate the random dishes that America could conjure up. He was running out of foods he knew how to make with what Russia had. And he didn't want to eat leftovers for every single meal.

"Hey we should double date sometime," Antarctica signed to America. He was found of the two, and with three of them being known as colder countries they got along to a certain degree. America wasn't always the nicest to him, but he was hopeful for a

change. Lately, it did seem as if he was starting to cool down.

"Yeah sure, " America signed back to him, eyeing Russia. "Just let us start dating first."

Antarctica smiled and nodded, realizing that they weren't together yet. He hadn't seen Russia act the way he has been with anyone but America. And with how America has just been flirting with him and just doing whatever he could to be by him he just figured they were dating.

"What did you say to him?" Russia raised a brow, noting America's usual cocky smile.

"Nothing~," He said in a sing-song voice.

"I'm not gay." He flatly told Antarctica, assuming that's what America had said. He did eye him after all.

"Whatever you say, " Antarctica responded in Russian Sign. Whether or not if he was being sarcastic was confusing to Russia, the exact tone was determined by his expressions and Anta was just smiling happily up at him. "Most countries are gay, so it wouldn't be surprising."

"Most, not all. I am part of the few."

"I can change that if you want.~" America cooed, leaning onto Russia and wiggling his eyebrows. Russia shoved him away, his face growing red. He tried to turn away before anyone could notice, but observant Anta was already smiling about it.

"He's blushing," he signed to America. They both chuckled, Anta making the motions to do so. "He's just in denial."

"Oh, we all know that."

"I'm not past duck taping yourrr mouth shut," Russia growled, keeping his back to the two. He didn't have to see what Anta was saying to know it was about him. Then the thought of America knowing he was blushing at his advances made him groan on the inside. Great, now he wasn't going to stop.

"Aww, you love it when I tease you.~"

"Shut up."

"That didn't sound like a disagreement."

Russia couldn't help but fold into himself and buried his face in his hands. Why the hell couldn't he stop the blood that was rushing to his cheeks? He got that he was embarrassed, but he can handle embarrassment better than what he was showing right now. He knew this was something different, and he didn't like that.

"You two have fun, I have to get going." Anta motioned as he stood to get his coat.

"Aww, really?"

Anta nodded grabbing everything that he needed. He looked over at Russia and was reminded of his boyfriend. Greenland was always so cold towards others, but whenever he was with him, he became this happy and cheerful person. The kindest that Antarctica could ever have known. And whenever he got him flustered, he would try to hide, too. He saw the same thing with Russia and America. But then again, he could always be wrong.

But he usually wasn't in things like this.

"Thank you for the food."

"Ahh, no probs. Oh, actually do you think you could give this to my brother?" America pulled out the envelope Canada had given him, his letter replaced with one that America wrote. He resealed it and marked the front so that Canada knew he hadn't just sent back what he had written to him. He knew how he got when he was anxious.

"You arrre leaving?" Russia asked upon turning around and seeing Anta dressed to go outside. He had just shaken himself from his own thoughts, already trying to shun them and stuff them down.

Anta nodded to him and took the letter from America, putting it in his satchel.

"Yeah, I promised I wouldn't be long."

"It was nice of you to visit," Russia said as he stood up to shake Anta's hand.

"Thank you for having me," Anta signed and shook his hand, allowing Russia to hold open the door for him. "I will tell everyone you are well and will be home soon. And if you can't stand each other any longer, I can see if I can get some sort of ride for America."

Russia looked down at America, who was adjusting the blanket around him. He didn't want to leave him with anyone else if he wasn't sure that he would be okay. Antarctica can handle the cold, traveling at high speeds in such a cold would do nothing to him. But for America with his already sensitive skin and a higher probability for extra tissue damage? No, he didn't want to risk it. He'll wait until he could clear away a path for them, so he could do it himself. That way he could know what to in case of an emergency and be able to keep him safe.

"We'll be okay. I don't want to rrrisk anything until I know he can vithstand the kold a little more."

"You talking shit?" America pipped up.

"Always," Russia chuckled but didn't turn to face him. Anta told America to shush and motioned him to go away before opening the door a little more. The wind had calmed down, turning into a slight breeze that blew in small puffs of snowflakes. America realized why he was told to move and pushed himself away, making him look like a hermit crab in a fabric like shell.

Anta gave everyone one finale wave before leaving, hoping to make use of the remaining sunlight he had.

"So, Antarctica doesn't mind coming by, but everyone else?" America stood up, holding the blanket close to him as if it were a cape.

"Everyone else doesn't carrre too much." Russia shrugged it off,

knowing very well that other countries are put off by him. Again, he was used to it. For a moment, he did forget about it. About his place in the eyes of everyone else. Having America by him all the time, happy and welcoming, it made him believe for a second he did belong.

But that was a fools belief to have, especially with his family history.

"I care."

"You'rrre the exception I guess."

America frowned, looking down at the floor. As Russia walked by him, he quickly turned around and hugged him from behind.

Russia froze, a blush forming on his cheeks again. The surprise attack of affection confused him and sent a shiver down his spine. Normally, he hated feeling people behind him and would try to get them back in his line of sight but at the moment, he didn't care.

"You going to let go?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Cause I'm an annoying piece of shit."

The elongated sigh made America smile and chuckle silently to himself. All of a sudden his feet no longer touched the ground, and he felt himself being lifted up. He grabbed onto Russia's shirt and held on tightly as he felt his hands hold onto his legs to lift him up onto his back. Once Russia started walking towards the living room, America realized he was probably going to be thrown down on the couch so Russia could be rid of him.

He wasn't going to have that.

As predicted, Russia let go of America's legs and grabbed him to pull him off of his back. America whined in protest, but was ignored and then held in Russia's hands like a whining child. Just as

he was dropped to fall down on the couch, America grabbed Russia's shirt collar and pulled him down with him. Russia let out a small surprised shout, catching himself on the side of the couch and hovering over America.

"Why you trying to get rid of me, Ruski?" America smirked, holding onto his shirt still and trying to pull him closer.

"Kause I like to be alone sometimes," he tried to pull himself away from America's hold on him but it didn't work.

"But what if I want to be by you?~"

"Zen tough."

They both stayed like that, Russia holding himself up over America, Russia trying his best to keep his frown on and ignoring the feeling of butterflies in his stomach, while America gave him a sly smile while keeping his hold on Russia's shirt. He glanced at Russia's neck, the shadows darkened by his sunglasses and made the hickies harder to see. He was tempted to sit up slightly and have at him again, holding him down and hear his suppressed moans. But at the same time, he wanted to have Russia pin him down as he had done once before and do the same, and that one felt confusing. It felt like bottom energy, and America refused to be a bottom.

"Hey Ruski.~"

"What?" Russia groaned, frowning deeply at the sight of his own reflection in America's sunglasses.

"Can I have a kiss?~"

Russia blinked and couldn't help his face growing red again. Aw shit, he thought. No. No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

"That's a lovely face of surprise you have there." America chuckled, losing his flirty demeanor for a moment. He saw Russia's blush clear as day and seen his eyes widen, so he knows he did have an effect on him. Now only if Russia could stop being in denial about it all, it would make everything a lot easier.

"Just let me go," Russia turned his head down, trying to hide his face the best he could.

"I'll let you go if you give me a little kiss.~"

"I'm about to slap you."

"Oh, daddy please.~"

Russia pushed himself away, forcefully yanking his shirt out of America's grasp. America barely had time to blink and when he did, he spotted Russia dashing up the stairs like the devil was on his heels. He frowned and crossed his arms.

"God damn it."

Upstairs, Russia ran into his room and slammed the door. He held his back pressed up against it as if a horde of zombies were behind it, and he needed to keep them out. Oh, how Russia would have preferred zombies. Instead, he was left with America being the flirty ass he was, holding him close to him and then calling him. . . t-that.

"I'm not gay, I'm not gay, I'm not gay," Russia repeated, trying to remind himself as he sunk to the floor. There was no way what happened was what it looked like. He just got annoyed with him and left, not because being called- oh god why does that just- of all things?

"uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh."

"Hey, Russia?"

Oh, god.

"Russia, you good?"

He groaned as a response.

"Dude, I'm sorry I. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable or anything."

"You didn't make me unkomforrrtable." Russia began to explain but

then realized that made it sound like he enjoyed it. "I mean, I'm used to you doing that, komrrrade. You just got. . . annoying."

Smoothly put together, they both thought. America smiled proudly knowing he could make Russia blush and panic. Russia rubbed his face with his hand and decided that he needed to fix whatever was happening. America is a friend, a comrade. Not. Not anything else.

"Hey, I'm kind of cold."

Russia looked up and moved to open the door. When he did, America fell into the room, landing on his back. He had sat down to press his back against the door, and that ended up with him looking up at Russia. Refraining from his natural instinct, he didn't say something flirty and instead waved.

"Do you vant me to turrrn up heat?" Russia knelt down, picking him up and holding him bridal style. America blushed, growing warmer already and he nervously laughed. Damnit, America, pull yourself together, he scolded himself.

"Nah, I rather you just hold me like this instead," he buried his head in his shoulder, holding onto his other shoulder with his hand. America hummed, the vibrations running up Russia's neck and made him twitch a little.

Not finding the willpower to object, Russia decided to just let America do his thing, and he would have to deal with it. Only because he wants to make sure he is warm and comfortable. And it's not like holding him wasn't a bad thing.

Russia took him downstairs, back to the living room, so he could sit down and watch some TV until America felt a little better. it wasn't too late, but the outside had darkened and Russia hoped that Antarctica knew what he was doing. Of course, he knew how to navigate the snow, but the wild animals that came out during the night were dangerous. Russia would sometimes get lucky and they wouldn't be dangerous to him, but he didn't want to take that chance.

"What are you doing?" America asked as he held on tighter so that

Russia could grab a movie.

"Vatching TV kause you von't let me go."

America was fine with that. He felt a little tired anyway, and if he could fall asleep in Russia's lap again that would be amazing. He was comfortable, oddly warm since he was usually cold, and being close like this might make him realize that he likes this too.

The two sat down on the couch, Russia watching the TV and following along better than America. It was all in Russian, America only catching a few words to get the gist. The house was quiet and still, the wind outside barely audible, the movie filling the gap with noise well enough to keep things from being unsettling. The language barrier was the only problem, though. America needed work on his Russian and decided to use this as practice. But that got frustrating for him, so when Russia chuckled at a joke he didn't understand, he decided to just fall asleep.

Russia was distracted by the TV and didn't notice America had taken off his glasses until he spoke up and said, "Nighty night, Ruski."

"Alrrready?" He scoffed, looking down at him. When he saw his sunglasses were off he instinctively exclaimed, "wait!"

"What?" America looked up at him, raising a brow.

Russia froze, not realizing fully he had said something, or why he did. But as he saw America's eyes looking up at him, that shock left him. His shoulders slumped and he smiled. He knew why. But to admit that to America? That's like admitting defeat. So he settled with, "Neverrr mind."

America, knowing very well what, smiled and nodded. He waited until Russia turned his head back to the TV before he quickly sat up and kissed his cheek. Then before anything else, he hurriedly said, "g' night" and buried his face back in Russia's shoulder.

**((I literally couldn't type Antarctica's name without smiling, I don't know why. Well, of course, I know he a smol bean, but**

**still. Sorry for the extra wait for this chapter, I had to write a fucking long ass essay (American school system sucks ass) and I'm trying to get used to this whole quarantine thing. You would think this would allow me to write more often, but nope. It allows me to procrastinate even more!))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# What A Twist

[image]

**Russia's POV**

"I'll let you go if you give me a little kiss.~"

I looked down at his shitty ass smile, the sunglasses that reflected my deep frown that tightened with the passing seconds. My eyes glanced down, a small dart, and yet it was enough to make the temptation start.

"I'll let you go if you give me a little kiss.~"

The words echoed around me, and I felt those retched butterflies start fluttering around in my stomach. The buzzing from my heart filled my cheeks and made my fingers feel warmer, too. I gripped the couch's side and curled my other free hand into a tight fist. My mind went blurry with the speed of passing thoughts, my eyes darting as I tried to get them to stop so I can process them.

"I'll let you go if you give me a little kiss.~"

I looked at him, seeing his sunglasses now set aside. How he did that with his hands still holding my shirt, I didn't know. But in a moment, it wouldn't even matter.

As he opened his mouth to say the same line again, I leaned forward and smashed our lips together.

In a flash, my eyes shot open and I bolted upright. My eyes were wide, my face warm and felt like it was glowing from the heat. A fast drumbeat pounded in my chest as my eyes darted around me. It was dark, almost silent. White static noise was the only sound that filled the Livingroom, where I come to recognize is where I was. The image of America under me was burned in my head, casually flashing from that to one of us with our lips locked.

Then the memory of America kissing my cheek. I froze, not knowing how to react. By the time I thought to say something, America had fallen asleep.
I groaned and covered my face with my hands, trying to get the memory of the dream from my mind.

A whining caught my attention, and I looked down.  America was curled up in my lap, his body turned towards mine and his hands curled around my shirt and the blanket that covered him. The sight would have been peaceful, but I felt more embarrassed than anything, especially after that dream. Either feeling I could of had left when he whined again. His face contorted into a painful expression and his lip trembled, his hands tightening around their hold.

"Amerrrika?" I asked, nudging his shoulder.

Tears welled in his eyes, slowly starting to drip down and he as his brows furrowed closer together.

I panicked and sat up further, realizing he was having a nightmare.

"Amerrrika, hey, hey wake up," I shook his shoulder with more force. He whined again, his legs curling inwards and his hands moving to grab my shirt, pulling on it tightly. "Wake up, Amerrrika."

"Please," he whimpered, a small choke of tears cutting off whatever else he was going to say.

"Amerrrika," I sat him up, holding onto his back and grabbing his arm. I shook him slightly, hoping the motions would awake him slowly so he wouldn't be in a panic. Once his eyes began to flutter open, I stopped. The tears stopped forming, slowly going down in their numbers until all there was were the liquid gathered around the eyes.

"Arrre you okay?" I asked him, wiping away the tears with the palm of my hand. His gaze was distant, not even looking up at me, a thousand-yard stare. Instead of answering me, he adjusted himself, pulling the blanket around us and hugged me tightly. I tensed up,

confused slightly but relaxed and hugged him back. He wasn't okay and couldn't talk about it yet. I could wait until he was.

America whined and sifted around more, his leg grinding against my crotch. I caught the gasp in my throat and tried to get him to stop moving around by standing up. He held onto me tightly, wrapping his arms around my neck and wrapping his legs around my waist. I held onto him, rubbing his back to help console him as I moved us upstairs.

I set him down on my bed, gathering the blankets around him and trying to make him comfortable. When I turned to leave the room, I heard him sit up and he called out, "No, please don't leave me alone."

I froze mid-step and felt a pain go through my heart.

"I need to turrrn off T.V, I kan't leave it rrrunning," I turned to him. His face in the low moonlight shined in his black eyes and the remnants of remaining tears. He looked scared, lonely and I knew I couldn't leave him like that.

"Herrre," I handed him my ushanaka and he took it with a look of confusion. "I promise, I will be right back. Just hold onto that until I do, okay?"

He nodded slowly, curling himself around it. For a moment I was reminded of the day my father died as I cradled his ushanka in my arms and curled around it. I blinked my eyes to rid myself of the memory and quickly left the room.

The TV turned off with a click and I put away the movie. Everything was quiet in my house. It was always unnatural when that happened, and I expected the storm outside to fill the noise. Curious, I walked over to the window and drew back the curtains. Outside the snow had stopped falling, but it piled up to the window's edge. It swayed like a snapshot of a wavey ocean, rolling hills of snow. The winter woods closed in around the house and covered the land across the road. The icy particles shimmered in the moonlight, the clouds parting enough to see the glimpses of the sky and twinkling stars.

I sighed at the sight, knowing how nice a cool winter night would feel. To sit outside and have a drink while the snow absorbed all the sound would be peaceful. But I couldn't leave America. And I said I wouldn't be long.

I closed the curtains again and started to walk back to the staircase. My stomach rumbled and I thought a small snack wouldn't hurt. As I was about to walk to the kitchen I felt a slight breeze. I turned towards the back door and froze.

It was open.

Snow trailed in like footprints.

Not making any noise, I crept into the living room and reached under the couch. I pulled out a pistol and made sure it was loaded.

Silently I crept towards the back door, my ears straining to hear something and my eyes darting around. It was dark, and it was hard to see. I winced at every creak of the wood, shifting my weight on each step to prevent them.

Why would someone break-in?

How could they? It was freezing outside and I was far away from other homes. They would be dead by the time they reached my house. If they were on foot that is.

Once I got to the open door, I checked around to make sure no one was hiding. The trail of snow was definitely footprints, bootprints to be exact. I glanced outside, seeing them go from the doorway, down the steps, along the path and once they got to my father's headstone I lost sight of them. I wasn't entirely sure they even made it that far, the snow was at an odd angle. I closed and locked the door, keeping the key in my pocket instead of putting it back on the table.

I checked the rest of the downstairs, scanning thoroughly but found nothing. The snow went towards the back hallway but trailed off into smaller puddles and I couldn't tell which room they lead to. But I checked everything, my father's old study, the closet and even the hidden door that lead to a bomb shelter. Nothing and no one.

Upstairs I didn't find anyone either. There was no place for anyone to hide, none that I hadn't checked. I was trained for situations like this, I couldn't have missed anything.

When I went back to my room, I made sure that America was okay. He was in the same spot I had left him in, instead of curled into a ball though he was sitting upright wearing my uhsanka.
I held a finger over my mouth to tell him to be quiet. He looked at me confused but didn't say anything. When he noticed the gun in my hand his eyes widened and he held his hand over his mouth.

I grabbed my desk chair and carefully lifted it and set it up against my door, the space between the backrest of it high enough for the handle to fit under it. As carefully as I had placed that, I grabbed an empty glass cup and gently placed it on the seat, half on and half off. Any sort of vibrations or turn of the handle would send the cup crashing down.

"What's going on?" America whispered when I got close to him. I moved around him and got onto my bed, pulling him back into my lap. I rested the gun on my knee and placed my other hand on top of to keep balance, ready to shoot whoever might come in.

"The backdoorrr was open. Someone kame in." I explained, keeping my eyes on the door.

America was about to ask more questions but he bit his lip. I felt him shake for a moment, then he calmed himself down.

"You have another gun in here?"

"Da." I reached under the mattress and pulled out a glock. America cocked it and pointed it at the door with me, extending his arm out and holding it in the air. I set my hand on his arm and pushed it down.

"Save strrrength, keep arrrm rrrested."
America nodded and we both kept our focus on the door.

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**Mexico's POV**
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"Canada, wake up!" I yelled throwing a pillow at his head.

"Noooooooooo, " he groaned, taking the pillow I threw at him and using it to cover his head.

"Come on, you can't stay inside all day."

"Yeah, I can."

"Not if I have anything to do with it!" I jumped onto him, bouncing on the bed the best I could and then shaking his arm to try and get him to wake up. Or get up at least.

"Fine. Do you know where my bandage is?"

"By the lamp where you left it, " I reached over him to grab it for him. He blindly reaches put for it, his hand missing each time. I grabbed his hand and placed the bandage in his palm.

"Do you want anything for breakfast?" Canada asked me, sitting up. He covered his left eye quickly before I had the chance to see it and wrapped the eye bandage around it. He had been in an accident, nothing too serious but he didn't tell me what happened only that his eye was hurt pretty bad and needed to wear that so the light wouldn't affect it or something.

"Your pancakes are amazing, do you think you can make those again?" I rubbed the back of my neck, trying not to sound too excited. Canada laughed and nodded his head, giving me a slight noogie.

"Yeah buddy, I can make those again."

I smiled and watched him leave the room, his feet trailing behind him. A slight frown formed on my lips and I looked down at my hands.

"Thanks. . . Buddy."

After a moment I jumped up off his bed and chased after him. Canada's family's house was big, and I mean massive. It was almost like a mansion, but it didn't seem big enough for a mansion. Kind of

like France and UK wanted to make one, and almost did, but then decided that they should appear modest instead. Of course, that modesty left once you stepped inside. The floor was polished marble, the walls a light blue that we're lined with paintings and portraits. Expensive decorative pieces we're everywhere, on random tables that where sometimes under painting, big statues by themselves. And all of that was just in the bedroom wing.
I kind of felt out of place, dressed in basketball shorts, a tank top, and some once-white socks. Canada was dressed in flannel PJs with a robe, so I guess he kind of looked weird in such a prestigious place. But he still looked as if he belonged here.

Even their staircase was big!

As Canada took his time to walk down, I stopped at the top of them. Canada must have heard me pause so he turned and looked at me. "What is it?"

I looked behind me making sure that no one else was around me. When I turned back to tell Canada what I was doing he had already figured it out. "You're clear, I dont see anyone out here."

I smiled and reached under my shirt, undoing the bandages I wore around my chest. Canada began to hurry down the rest of the steps, hanging onto the railing to keep himself steady.

Once I had the bandages completely off, I breathed a sigh of relief and let my wings extend to their fullest.

It felt nice to stretch them out, to release the tension from my back and shoulders. I flapped them a little, the brown feathers flaring up.

I jumped up, flapping them to stay airborne. Then I dove down the stairs, zooming past Canada and soaring around their huge entranceway, going around the chandelier. I paused at the ceiling, grazing the texture with my fingers and looked down at Canada. My arms were strong, I had picked him up before. I could do it.

"Raise your hands!" I called down to him as I dove downwards towards him. He did as I had told him to and when I soared above him, I grabbed his hands and lifted him up in the air.

"Whoa, whoa, the ground is gone!" He exclaimed, holding onto me tighter.

I laughed, flying us around the room, down the bedroom hallway and back down the staircase. Canada was laughing loudly, letting out yelps when he got close to things and when I dipped down suddenly. I laughed at the sounds he would make and because of the feeling of wind beneath my wings.

My stretch and fun done, I lowered us to the ground at the base of the stairs. I slowly lowered Canada back to his feet and I dropped down next to him. He smiled at me, still laughing but trying to calm down.

"Canada!? Mexico!? Is that you two?" France's voice came from the dining room. I could hear her footsteps getting closer and I panicked, trying to wrap my bandages around my chest and wings to hide them. Canada had a better idea and grabbed his robe and put it around me, hiding my wings better than what I could have done.

"Yes, mom, we're over here!" He smiled down at me as I adjusted the long sleeves. I frowned and narrowed my eyes at him.

"No word on my size or I swear, I'll steal all your pancakes."

He faked a gasp and held his hand to his chest. "You wouldn't."

"Oh, I would."

We both broke and started laughing at each other. "Come on then, let's go in the kitchen."

"Wait, " I said climbing onto the outer rim of the stair railing. Canada had his back faced to me and he turned his head to see what I was doing. I jumped and landed on his back, Canada holding onto my legs and me wrapping my arms around his neck.

"Onwards great steed!"

"Charge!" Canada yelled as we ran into the kitchen.

**((Kind of short and sweet. I needed a little bit of CanMex in my system. And I couldn't sleep, have a small chapter as a result.**

**Also that video at the top is fucking funny and I loved it so much. They are actually a good artist and have done other things on their channel, you should check them out! They are called Obi Mas.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Whats This

**((For anyone wondering, yeah I changed the cover. Wattpad makes it all fuzzy so that's what it looks like hopefully more clear. There's a thing with these that you may notice.**

**Also, if you had any trouble with their accents, it's best to pronounce it out loud or comment and I will tell you. And there's things about panic attacks in here so if any of you all are sensitive to that read with caution and I can give a brief description at the end of the chapter.))**

**Germany's POV**

I hadn't been home in a while.

Not since what had happened a few days ago.

"Poland, I'll be back later, " I heard Czech call from the entrance. He spoke loudly and it snapped me from my thoughts and I jumped. Poland set his hand on my shoulder and I looked to him. Even his gentle touch had startled me a little.

"Okay!" He called back to Czech, speaking in a gentler tone when he saw how much I had jumped in the past few seconds. I was thankful for the thought but embarrassed there was a need for it. I shouldn't be jumpy, I was okay. At least, at the moment I was safe. We both were. I had no logical reason to be this on edge now, since a few days had passed.

"Ukochany, you've been like this ever since you came over, what is wrong?" Poland turned to me, concern in his eyes. His tone was low, quiet and steady, no clear drastic or sternness in it. My eyebrows slanted downward at his expression and I couldn't help but look at his scars. He had so many of them, and he couldn't hide them all. Even on his hands were the faint traces of healed wounds, more faded, but still there.

"Nozing, " I lowered my head, to hide my face. Lying to him was not something I wanted to do, but I couldn't tell him the truth, either. I didn't want to, no one could know. Poland the most. I need to lock that house and burn it down. But what if that doesn't help? What if that's what's keeping him in? What if I burn it and he gets free? Could he find me? Could he find Poland? What if he causes another war? What if more countries suffer? What if more die? All because of me.

"Niemcy, niemcy, your shaking," Poland took my hands, holding them tightly. His voice was muddled, distant and his hold was just as far away. The pressure of his hands where like a phantom's, there but not all at the same time.

The thought of a phantom made me shake more. My head started feeling light and my vision started to darken. My chest tightened and my throat started to burn.

A sudden pain made me gasp and snatched me from my thoughts. Poland had dug his nails into my skin and immediately released when he saw I had noticed.

"I'm sorry, you were going into another panic attack. I panicked!" Poland explained rubbing the crescent marks and then held my hands again. I was suddenly aware of my fast shallow breathing, my heart racing and the beads of sweet on my forehead. Hurting me like he did kind of seemed extreme, and I knew he wouldn't normally do that unless he had great reason to. And I have no right to even be mad at him, not after everything I must have put him through when I ran to him in a panic and refused to speak for a day.

"Ukochany, " Poland grabbed my attention once more, "I want you to try and focus on my hands, okay? You feel me squeeze them, you squeeze them back."

After a moment I nodded. My thoughts came back, swiftly carrying me off once more.

Poland squeezed my hands.

I had been at my house, things as normal as they hand been. Music played in the background as I read a book in the living room. Everything had been fine, peaceful, even. Had been.

I squeezed his hands.

Past tense was horrible. Especially when talking about the good, knowing that it was no longer there.

He squeezed my hands.

Then the spidery feeling of chills and cobwebs made my shoulder tense. The memories flashed in my head and instinct told me to freeze. Do not move out of line. Do not speak out of line, do everything in order and to a tee. Do not stutter, do not falter, do not do anything that wasn't perfect. Most of all, do not show fear.

He squeezed my hands again.

I blinked a few times and squeezed his hands.

Follow orders. Or there will be consequences.

He squeezed my hands and I did it back a second after.

"You aren't supposed to cry, remember mien sohn (my son)?"

He squeezed mine again.

The voice was distant, but all sound from the house had stopped to let me hear it. I was stuck in my spot, my fingers gripping the book, the pages bending into the pressure. I hadn't realized tears had gone down my face until they were pointed out.

I couldn't move. I wasn't supposed to move.

I squeezed his hands, my hold looser.

"Niemcy, what color is the couch?"

The question caught me off guard and I shook my head to focus on it. "Um, " I looked down, my vision blurry and unfocused. I had to

blink a few times, struggling to remember the question. Couch. Color. "R-red. Red."

Red like my father's skin. His terrifying claws that were sharp like knives.

He squeezed my hand then asked, "what color is the wall?"

I shook my head again, trying to focus enough to answer the question. "I, um. Uh, peige."

The dull color of the tattered rags Poland was forced to wear when he was in possession of my father.

After a moment I remembered to squeeze his hand.

He squeezed it back and asked me the color of the lamp.

I answered and squeezed his hand back.

After a while, my breathing had slowed and my heart rate steadied but the sense of fear never left. I couldn't shake it, the dreadful sense of something horrible about to happen. What was frustrating was that I couldn't tell if that was past feelings or not. Frustrating, and even more worrying.

"You feel a bit better now, Germany?" Poland cupped my face with his hands and gently held our foreheads together. I held his wrists loosely and nodded slowly. My arms still shook, less significantly as they had been though.

"Danke Polen (Thank you, Poland), " I spoke through a sigh with a breathy and weak voice.

"You'll be okay, I promise. I'll be here for you." He kissed my forehead lightly. The pain of that sentence weighed me down more than I thought it could.

"Put von't zat vare vu down?"

"Hmm?"

"I'm ein handful."

"Well, I do have two hands."

"Boland, I mean, " I sighed sharply, trying to figure out how to word my sentence. My eyes darted around, gathering details that where unnecessary to the moment. I forcfully focused downward but then I had to shut them to fully concentrate. "Aren't I hard to loffe? I'm alvays vorking, I haffe zo much pagkage, our family history, it's all. It-it. It has to pe too much."

I heard him sigh and he lifted my head up by my chin.

"Germany, what happened in the past isn't your fault. You were young then. You were in the same place as me, and you love me, don't you?"

I nodded and felt tears coming to my eyes. "Of courze I loffe vu."

"Then trauma or anything similar doesn't make you unlovable. Love isn't easy, especially with our histories, but that may be why we can get along as we do. We understand each other."

My lip quivered and the tears began to pour from my eyes. I leaned forward and wrapped my arms around him, hiding my face in his chest. He held me tightly, rubbing my back and allowing me to cry and let everything out. My fingers grasped his sweater, the fabric almost leaking out of the gaps between my fingers.

"Niemcy, I know I can't love your issues away, and you can't for me. But just know that I want to help you deal with them."

I nodded again and opened my mouth to speak but all that came out was gasps for breath and sounds that couldn't be even identified as words. I wanted to believe what he said, and a part of me did but another part of me didn't want to risk it. I didn't want to risk hope.

"Put, how can I pe sure, " I gasped with my voice trembling. "Vat if I hurt vu, or remind vu of zee bast? Vat if I'm too much like mien fazer."

His hand stopped dead in its tracks and I felt his body tense. "You're

nothing like him." Poland's voice lowered and became more sternly. He grabbed my shoulders and held me up face to face with him.

"You are not your father. You won't ever be. What happened was not your fault. Germany, I want you to say that."

I wiped away my tears and sniffled. "I'm not mien father. Vat habened vas. . . it vasn't mein fault."

Even saying that I didn't believe it.

"Ukochany, your father never cared for his actions." Poland looked down and sighed. His eyes held a deep pain, one shared with very few. It didn't do my guilt any good. "He didn't have remorse. But you, you are filled with it. You care about what you do and how it affects others."

He let go of my shoulders and held my hands, interlocking our fingers. "I won't lie, I'm scared too. I don't want you to be like him, " his voice hitched in pitch as he clearly held back tears, "and I want to do everything to keep you from that. Even if you can't see it, you are different. You have to be."

I smiled at him, wiping away his fresh tears. He sniffed and shut his eyes, trying to stop crying. When he opened his eyes again, they had the slightest red tint and sheen of tears. I cupped his face and kissed him lightly then held him close to me, almost cradling him in my arms.

In a moment of vulnerability, the fleeting thought of telling him the one thing about myself I was hiding came into my head. As quick as it was, it was still the only thing that was needed for me to speak without a sceound thought.

"Can I, " I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Can I tell vu zomezing?"

"Anything, " Poland held me closer.
I held my eyes shut and then tried to tell myself it was a bad idea and I should say something else. But I knew I could trust him. I have been worried about it, and if I didn't tell him now, I possibly

never will.

"I. I, uh. Do. Do vu...rememper how mien fazer had his scharp teeth?"

There was no answer for a few seconds then I felt him nod his head.

"I haffe zem too."

He sat up and looked at me, obviously puzzled. "What do you mean? I haven't seen them."

I hung my head in shame, bending inwards. "I know. I. I zand zem dovn veneffer zey grow boinded."

"Neimcy, doesn't that hurt?" He held my face and opened my mouth, holding back my lips a bit. "How long have you been doing that, that can't be healthy."

I leaned back, shocked that he would inspect my mouth as if I were a horse. Being direct was Poland's signature, so I wasn't frozen in shock for long. Still, I allowed him to thoroughly inspect my mouth. I knew my teeth would be slightly more pointed then average, but not directly noticeable. I felt him run his fingers over my front teeth and furrow his eyebrows down with concern.

"Teeth don't grow like that, this is weird."

"I hoh-" I stopped when I realized anything I said wouldn't be intelligible. My face grew pink from the embarrassment of even trying. But what he said, I already figured out. I knew teeth don't grow pointed, that was the whole point of me fearing them. I had only known my father to have sharp teeth, and it was a staple of his.

"You say they grow back?"

I nodded, and he let me go. I closed my mouth and adjusted my jaw, rubbing my tongue across my teeth and trying to be rid of the dry feeling.

"Teeth don't do that. They don't keep growing, they just stay the

same size."

The look of confusion spoke for me.

Poland pointed to his own mouth as he said, "my teeth stay like this, and if I sand them down they will stay the size of which I sanded them to. You would have only needed to sand them once then never again."

I rubbed my cheek and caught onto what he was saying. When I was a kid, my teeth would be pointed, yes, but they wouldn't keep growing. Why would they keep growing back to how they were before? Biologically, it didn't make sense.

"Am I curzed?"

"No, I don't think you are, " Poland rubbed his hands over his own mouth and I saw his tongue trace the tips of his own teeth. As a child I was told many stories about curses, and to fear and hate the people who could place them onto you. But now that I'm older, I still follow that lesson to an extent. My father gave me these, as if he were the one placing the curse on me.

I both fear and hate him.

"I think maybe you see them like that cause your, " he snapped me from my thoughts once more and allowed me a moment to regain reality. "Your father had them, too. But that doesn't have to be the only reason." He quickly rushed the last sentence.

I frowned and rubbed my arm.

"Hey, Germany, I know you are scared about this and you trusted me with this." He grabbed my hands and held them to his chest. "From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for that."

"I trust vu," I told him, assuredly.

"I trust you, too."

Poland smiled warmly at me then I saw it falter. He looked down, the familiar distant look in his eyes just barely coming in.

"Are vu okay?" I asked, leaning towards him to get into his line of sight.

He nodded, still looking down. He shifted his shoulders uncomfortably and I feared for a moment he might be going into a flashback of his own.

"Can I show you something?"

Knowing that when our roles were reversed I had told him about my fears, so what he could have to show me now was alarming. I was nervous. Incredibly nervous. But I nodded my head yes anyways.

He turned around so his back faced me and began to take off his sweater. I winced, expecting to see the scars from his torture since I hadn't seen his back until now. But when he took off his shirt, I gasped. Not for the reasons I thought I would have.

Near his shoulder blades were two, what once could have been white, stumps that had clearly been burned. The skin had grown back over it, creating a rough look with jagged bumps. It wasn't a clean cut, more like the bone and tissue had been ripped from it's place and the wound had been burned so he wouldn't bleed put. His cries of pain from the past started to play in the back of my mind.

"Vu had vings?"

"Y-yeah." His voice was small and shaky.

Tears stung at my eyes as I remembered hearing his cries and screams from time to time, sometimes echoing into the night. My hand hovered shakily over my mouth that was wide in horrified awe while my other brushed over what was left of his wings.

"Oh Gott Boland, I'm zo zorry."

I was there all that time and could have stopped this.

"It's okay, it was years ago."

I glanced at the rest of his back, seeing what looked like hundreds

of scars all varying in sizes. All of that seemed minuscule to the horrors of losing wings.

Wings were unique, rare and seen as treasure. Some even had small powers to them. Kaz's I knew could glow, while his younger brothers could generate their own warmth or energy, I wasn't quite sure. Those two were the only ones I knew where open about having wings. Anyone else who may have them kept them hidden cause there were plenty of countries in history who were sought after for those unique gifts. Targeted, and hurt. Sometimes even killed. I didn't know Poland had been one of them.

He began to put his shirt back on and when the fabric covered everything, I could finally break my gaze. Before he could turn around, I wiped away the tears that had fallen and tried to regain my composure.

Poland left his sweater off, tossing it to the floor to be picked up later. I glanced at it, fighting the urge to pick it up and fold it and place it somewhere better. I knew sometimes Poland did little things like that cause my instinct was to keep everything neat just to tease me a little but this time it was just subconscious.

Still, it bugged me.

"I'm zorry for hefferyzing zat habened to vu. Effen if it vasn't mien fault."

Poland held his hand on his shoulder and slouched. "It's okay, you didn't do anything wrong. I'm sorry that you feel like you have something to be sorry about."

I rubbed my eyes, the nagging memories again resurfacing. My glasses fell back into place once I moved my hand. Under the stress I felt the sense of exhastion. It was late, I knew, and Poland and I were only up to watch a few movies. But that seemed like it was forever ago.

"Can ve ko to ped?"

Poland nodded, and stood grabbing my hand. He started leading me

to the bedroom but I quickly grabbed his sweater first. I heard him chuckle but say thank you and continued on. Once I had put his sweater away properly, he gave me a pair of his clothes so I could have something to sleep in. We both got changed and laid down next to each other. Poland wrapped his arms around me and held me close, and I covered his hands with my own.

"I love you, ukochany."

"I loffe vu too."

A moment of silence fell between us before I heard him chuckle to himself. I peeked my eyes open, curious to what could make him sound so light hearted.

"Vat?"

"Nothing, " he stifled another chuckle. "I just thought your sharp teeth could kind of be kinky."

"Boland!" I gasped, hiding my face in my hands and blanket. My face flushed red and the buzzing of embarrassment fluttered in my stomach. Poland laughed behind me, nuzzling my neck.

"Aw, niemcy, don't be shy.~"

I mumbled a response, not really knowing what to say. He giggled to himself a little bit more, then hummed as he calmed down.

"Don't worry, ukochany, I won't bother you about them."

I swallowed loudly and turned my head in his direction. After a long moment of hesitation, I shly said, "Vell, if vu really do like zem."

Poland kissed my cheek and my face flushed red once more. "I guess we'll have to see." He hugged me tighter then relaxed his hold a little. I let myself calm down, but couldn't help but picture Poland and I together in a heated moment, with me nibbling his skin with sharper teeth. I wouldn't ever hurt him too much, and would only go as far as Poland would like. So the idea made me nervous but excited at the same time. It was. . . interesting to say the least.

But as Poland has said, I concluded, we would have to wait and see.

((**What's this? Some Gerpol? Oh my gosh yes! I had to and no one could stop me. Oh Poland, finding a new kink is not the only surprise in store for you. *le wink* And yeah this had nothing to do with the little message I had sent out, aBsOlUtElY nOtHiNg xD. Either way, new chapter in like three days. Cool, this containment thing has really given me a chance to do smaller little chapters like this as I used to. But don't worry after this we can check up on Russia and America. Let's hope they didn't die. ))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

**~~~~Le description of panic attack~~~~**

Germany was having sort of a flash back moment from an event that happened a few days prior to him practically running to Poland's house. He was sitting in his living room reading when he felt the familiar presence of his father and he heard his voice. What he couldn't figure out was if it was real or sort of a flashback triggered by that familiar feeling. Then Poland helped him calm down and distract him from the issue for now until he can talk about it without going too far back into the moment.

# Time To Be Gay

**((Okay, this is a collab I did with my girlfriend MysterySaviour, and if you haven't heard me say it, I'll say it again. I love this woman, she is the light of my life and the best person I could ever ask for to be my girlfriend. Why she likes me will remind a mystery to me, but she does and I don't wanna let her go. But we had the idea of doing a collab and it's was awesome and so fun to do! You all should totally go read her book Black Coffee, I love it, its really good and it's concept is unique, the characters are amazing and so well written and it's just so flipping extraordinary I can't describe it!))**

**Okay a little key to help ya all out.**

**Ella- MysterySaviour**
**Morning- me**
**Her America- Meri**
**Her Russia- Ruski**
**My America- Ame**
**My Russia- Russia (cause we are creative xD)**
**Okay, enjoy**

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Ella smiled to herself as she dialled her girlfriend's number in her phone, chewing on her nails in unneeded anxiety. They had been planning to hang out together for a while and had finally figured out how, so she was calling to let her know she was heading over.

As the phone rung, Morning quickly ran over her features to make sure she looked presentable and as if she wasn't having a small panic attack the moment the phone started to ring. Normally she wouldn't care, but with the chance of seeing her girlfriend, she wanted to make sure nothing was out of place to ensure that she didn't make a fool of herself. More than she usually did that is.

Before the phone could stop ringing, she answered it and tried to
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calm down the excitement that had been buzzing in her stomach. "Yellow?"

"Heeeeyyyyyy," Ella answered, jumping slightly from the sound. "I'm just around the corner from the fourth wall, are you close or should I be worried?"

"This is me, you should always be worried, " Morning chuckled lightly. "Nah, I'll be good. I'm almost there."

"Oki doki! Can't wait!" Ella giggled, skipping slightly as she walked. "See you theeeeeereee~ I love you!"

She hung up (because she has a bad habit of hanging up prematureely) and went on her merry way, unaware of the two following her.

"She's up to something," Meri observed, narrowing his eyes as he poked his head out from around the side of a random building.

Ruski snickered behind him and pat his back, "When isn't she? I'm sure it's nothing."

Meri frowned and stared at her for a little longer before walking after her. Ruski's eyes widened as he straightened, chasing after him.

"Damnit America!"

"Love you too!" Morning got in before she heard her hang up. She wasn't sure if she got it through or not, but just to make sure she'll tell her in person.

At the thought of seeing Ella in person, Morning smiled to herself, a wide goofy smile that she couldn't shake. Her only concern then was to make sure this whole fourth wall breaking didn't do anything she didn't want it to. It was bad enough she had Japan. Japan could already could break the fourth wall, and Ame himself started to think about small moments that seemed way to orchestrated, she didn't want to risk anything else. But this was for Ella. The risk would be worth it.

Ella approached the wall with a wide grin, every never in her body fizzing with excitement. They'd finally be able to cuddle and hug and hold hands and cuddle!!

She tapped two bricks parallel from each other, then two on the sides, and finally the centre one. Suddenly the portion of the wall in front of her shattered as if it were glass and the dust of the former bricks carried on the wind like a fine powder.

Travelling through their books was an interesting idea, one that Ella suggested. Morning couldn't wait to finally be able to see her, and hold her and just be able to exist by her. It would be so amazing and fun! Most of all, she wanted to play with her hair and floof it since it was newly short.

Morning swallowed her anxiety and tried to think about how she would break the wall. There were many ways, so she did something simple.
As Morning was about to use a hammer to break it, Japan poked her head around the corner. She knew what she was doing and had managed to grab ahold of Russia and Ame. They were in a sort of daze being pulled from the last chapter they were in. Dazed enough for Japan to make sure they'd followed her.

Ella smiled and nodded from her handiwork, stepping over the wall and into the neutral zone between books. A place where authors could mingle and enter each other's books - sort of like a hub or lobby for fanfictions.

Meri noticed that the wall was beginning to rebuild itself as soon as she stepped over the rubble, dust particles and ground-up cement glueing together to reform the wall and seal the characters inside. He grabbed Ruski's hand and dashed for the exit, only just barely making it before the hole got too small. Ruski quickly snatched his Ushanka from the other side and popped it on his head, giving Meri a dirty look.

"What was that for--"

Meri shushed him and pushed him behind a nearby couch, ducking when he saw Ella look around in confusion at the sound before

shrugging and turning away. He sighed in relief, leaning back against Ruski who he had landed on top of, the taller just very confused and very gay.

Morning stepped over the broken shards of the wall, now shattered like glass. The pieces crunched under her shoes, and she winced at the sounds, kicking a few of them away so they wouldn't go through the soles of her shoes.

Once Japan saw the author of her book walk through, she grabbed Ame and Russia by their arms and hurried them over to the hole. The glass would be hard getting over but then she got an idea. As the glass began to float up to place themselves where they originally where, Japan lead the two between the glass shards carefully not letting them make a sound. It was hard lugging Russia around, but she managed to get them mostly through before Ame tripped over his feet and fell down.

Morning jumped and spun around, just in time to see Japan standing there with her hands tucked over her skirt and smiling widely. She had practically thrown Russia and Ame to the side, hiding them behind one of the couches that had lined the wall. It looked like a seating area for multiple people.

"Japan! You know you're not supposed to be here." Morning scolded and began to lead Japan right back to the wall. A little disappointed she wouldn't be there with Russia and Ame, she felt somewhat accomplished to have gotten them inside.

"Stay." Morning pointed to the ground, leading Japan back through the wall, opening up a small door instead of breaking it. Once she knew that Japan couldn't sneak through again, Morning continued on her way to find Ella.

Seeing her girlfriend, Ella squealed and ran full speed at Morning as she neared, throwing her arms around her and laughing.

Morning laughed loudly, holding Ella close to her, almost lifting her off the ground. She couldn't help the small tears that came to her eyes as she got to see her girlfriend for the first time.

"I love you." She said, making sure this time she heard it.

"I love you too ya GOOSE!" Ella cried, peppering kisses all over her girlfriend's face.

Meri popped his head up from behind the couch.

"What do you see?" Ruski whispered.

Meri snickered, ducking back behind the couch, "Lesbians."

Morning giggled and blushed, happy to finally get kisses from her. She pulled Ella into one more tight hug holding on for just a second more than letting her go to give her a kiss on the cheek.

Russia rubbed his head, feeling tired and strange, looked around. He noticed he didn't recognize his surroundings and heard voices he didn't recognize. Ame, who let out a low groan was just starting to sit up. Russia quickly grabbed him, covering his mouth with his hand and held him close to him. With his back pressed up against the cushion of the couch, Russia peeked over and saw the two girls. Then he quickly ducked back down, getting all he needed. Two unfamiliar looking people, which means stay hidden until he could find out any answers.

Ame, being used to being grabbed and held protectively by Russia by now, allowed himself a moment to steady the dizziness in his head.

Ella rubbed her cheek on Morning and grabbed her hands, pulling back.

"I have a surprise for you~" She sang, pulling her over to one of the brick walls of the other fanfics.

"Oooh, I love surprises!" Morning beamed, looking towards the wall that she was lead to.

Russia took his hand off of Ame's mouth when he knew he would be silent. The two sat still, listening to the conversation. They didn't sound harmful, but that didn't mean they were harmless.

"Ok, it's just over here..."

The voices of the two girls became quieter as they walked further away. The sound of the wall smashing and reconstructing only solidified Meri's confidence that they were gone. He jumped up from behind the couch, making Ruski jump, ready to protect him if something happened.

Meri whistled, placing his hands on his hips as he looked around at the tall ceilings and flawless architecture, "Wow! Look at this place! Reminds me of Wreck it Ralph."

"The kid's movie?" Ruski smiled.

Meri shot him finger guns and a wink with a devilish smile, "You know it!"

"Did you hear that?" The America hiding behind the couch with Russia gasped. "Those voices sound like us."

Russia peeked his head over the couch and froze once he spotted the figures. He recognized America and for a moment he thought he had somehow gotten over there. But then the other figure, it looked like him!

"What the fuck." He gasped, ducking back down and trying to figure out what to do.

Meri laughed and spun around, yelling at the ceiling to hear the echo.

"America!" Ruski hissed, grabbing his arm and putting his finger over his lips. "Are you trying to get us caught??"

"Oh please," Meri scoffed, taking Ruski's hand away. "They're not around. They've fucked off to some other place, I dunno."

He smirked up at Ruski, swaying slightly and leaning unto him, intertwining their fingers. "Besides, don't you wanna live dangerously, Ruski~?"

Ruski blushed and pressed their foreheads together, "...maybe."

Ame, growing curious, crawled out of Russia's lap to look around the corner of the couch. Russia stuffed down a scolding and grabbed his ankle to try and drag him back. Ame kicked his hand away and landed against a small table that was by the couch. He saw the other versions of themselves standing close together, foreheads touching and he smiled.

"Fucking knew he was gay," He muttered to himself.

Russia grabbed ahold of Ame again, trying to get him to hide. He pulled him back down, causing Ame's hand to slip and knock off the vase that was on the table. When it shattered on the ground, Ame jumped back into the arms of Russia, who held him close and prepared to be discovered.

The Russia and America in the middle of the room jumped away from each other, both tensing; ready to run or fight. When they saw who it was who knocked over the vase they relaxed, and America even laughed.

"Hi!" He called, making a big wave movement with his arm. Ruski quickly put his arm down and gave him a scolding look.

"Sorry about him," Ruski apologised, approaching them slowly. "Don't worry, we're not going to hurt you."

"And how do we know that?" Russia narrowed his eyes at his doppelganger, holding his America close to him.

"Duh, cause they are us, look at them!" Ame waved to the other America who had waved to them. "Something about them seems off, though, but there's always something off about everybody you meet."

Still, Russia kept his eyes trained on the ones in front of them, making sure Ame couldn't get out of his grasp.

"Oh, right, obviously," Meri laughed at his stupidity and pressed on the back of his neck, allowing his human disguise to float away.

"America!!" His Russia chided, blushing hard and taking off his jacket to cover him. "What the hell?? Put that back on!!"

"Awww, is Ruski embarrassed another Russia gets to see me like this~" Meri cooed.

Ruski blushed, "N-no--"

"In any case," Meri smiled, taking away the jacket. "HI AMERICA!!!"

He gave a big wave again and ran over, giving the other America in the other Russia's arms a big hug before jumping away.

"Oh shit sorry! I shouldn't have assumed you're a hugger- are you a hugger?? I'm a hugger--"

"Ok, Meri, don't suffocate the poor thing," Ruski warned, pulling him away and shooting the others an apologetic glance. "I'm so sorry about him."

"It's okay, I'm a hugger!" The America being restrained by Galaxy's Russia smiled wildly and tried to get out of Russia's arms. "It's just that someone won't let me go."

"Last time we ended up in a place we didn't know with people we didn't know we almost died, so shush." Russia stood up and held his Ame bridal style, eyeing the two others. The other America, he said something about a disguise and that definitely doesn't spell anything good.

"I don't know what you're talking about, " Ame ignored the rising pit in his stomach from faint memories and decided to focus on the two in front of them. "I'd like to apologize for my Russia, he doesn't trust anyone."

"Your Russia?"

"Yes mine, now shush, " Ame hushed him to talk to the other two. "I have a few questions. One being, what the actual hell is going on!?"

"Oh that's easy," Meri waved off. "You're actually a--"

Ruski put his hand over Meri's mouth, "Meri! Don't tell them! What if they freak out?? What if they spontaneously combust???"

Meri raised an eyebrow and licked his Ruski's hand, making the taller cringe and wipe it off on his shirt. "What I was TRYING to say was you two are technically in like...a multiverse hub, let's say. And we're from a different universe!"

Ruski raised an eyebrow at the other version of him, "Wait, are you two...not together?"

Meri rolled his eyes, "Don't be ridiculous Ruski! Of course they are!" He leaned into the other Meri and lowered his voice, "You are, right?"

"I'm not gay." Russia focused on that, finding the idea of alternate universes fitting for the situation. It's not the weirdest thing he had been presented with, and he doubts it would be the last.

"Wait....multiverse what? Like the movie with spiderman, into the spiderverse?" Ame tried to wrap his head around it. Then what was asked next hit him. "Oh wait, what about being gay?"

Ruski and Meri stared at the Russia opposite to them, puffing out their cheeks with air before bursting out laughing, Ruski bending over and holding his stomach with Meri falling all over him.

"Russia???" Meri gasped out between laughs. "Not...gay???"

The two howled with laughter again, Ruski barely able to breathe with tears in his eyes.

"What the hell are you laughng for?" Russia raised an eyebrow, looking at the two utterly confused. The America in his arms covered his mouth to stifle a laugh. The moment he saw those two he knew that they were a couple, and he knew exactly why they were laughing.

The two took a second to compose themselves, straightening up again.

"Ok, ok, ok, ok, ok," Meri wiped a tear from his eye, his cheeks and stomach hurting from laughing so much. "So, yea, this is like a spiderverse thing, but like, different. Because we're the same people. They were all different people."

Meri had managed to keep a straight face but as soon as he stopped talking Ruski burst out laughing again, looking away as Meri giggled as well.

"Okay we have that cleared away, why are you two laughing?" Russia narrowed his eyes at the both of them.

"Cause you claim you aren't gay, " the America in his arms clarified for him. "Look at them! Tell me you don't see it."

Meri grinned at them happily and gave his laughing Ruski a side hug, pulling him down to plant a kiss on his nose.

"You missed my mouth, котя (Russian: kitten)," Ruski purred, wrapping his arms around Meri and going in for the kiss.

Meri pushed him away with a giggle, "Hey, hey, we don't wanna make that poor America feel sad about his closeted Russia, do we?"

"Russia, why can't you treat me like that?" Galaxy's America whined, sitting up to dramatically drape his arms around his Russia's neck.

Russia rolled his eyes but didn't fight against him, only settling to say, "Cause I'm not your boyfriend, and I'm not gay. Closeted or any other." He enforced the end of the sentence towards the other two, ignoring the familiar stirring of his stomach he had gotten when he saw the two be affectionate towards each other.

"Sure you're not," Ruski chuckled, rolling his eyes. Meri gasped as he got a bright idea, beaming up at Ruski.

Ruski immediately took the hint, shaking his head, "Ohhhh, no. No no no no no, not happening."

Meri pouted and tugged on his arm, "Pleeeeeeeease, Ruski?"

"No."

"Pretty please with a cherry vodka on top?"

"No!"

"Whatever it is, it's coming from the other me so it must be good!" Ame smiled at his other self, while Russa frowned.

"If it's coming from any America, I don't trust it." Russia shook his head, actually trusting the other Russia's word this time. The America in his arms put on an offended expression and playfully hit his shoulder.

Meri giggled at them, "You guys remind me of us before we got together."

"I mean, that's what they are, right?" Ruski chuckled, putting an arm over Meri's shoulders. "And what he wants to do is--"

"We're gonna go hang out together and leave you two alone okay bye!" Meri rushed out as he twisted away from Ruski's arm and snatched Galaxy's America from the other Russia's grip, running away with him bridal style and leaving his boyfriend to yell at him.

"Wait, where are you going with him!" Russia yelled, moving to run after them but the Ame being carried away yelled to him, "I'll be fine, have fun with the other Russia!"

"Two Americas spells trouble." Russia rubbed his forehead and adjusted his ushanka.

"It sure fucking does," Ruski groaned, holding his face in his hands. "This is why I said nooooooooooo."

Ruski looked over at his America sweeping his doppelganger off his feet, "But you gotta admit, he's super strong. And fast. Not even breaking a sweat."

"Yeah, I can give him that. I don't think my America can do much without complaining about it." Russia chuckled to himself.

Russia glanced over at his other self, taking in his appearance and noting that something did seem off about him, but anything beyond that didn't scream dangerous. What he noticed was the loving look in Ruski's eyes as they followed his America.

"So, " Russia cleared his throat. "You two are really...," his voice

trailed off as he motioned to the both of them.

Ruski grinned, "Together? Hell yea. Been two years now. He's amazing."

He crossed his arms over his chest, smiling down at the ground, "He makes me smile every day and always know what to say to cheer me up. It may seem cheesy but he really just...gives me the strength to wake up every day, y'know?"

Russia rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly and didn't know how to feel about agreeing with him. Ame did always know how to help him out of a rut, making him smile even when he was trying his damn best to be angry with him. "Yeah, yeah he has that effect doesn't he?"

He quickly shook the smile away and covered up by saying, "what is a comrade for huh?"

Ruski smiled knowingly at him, shoving his hands into his jacket pockets. "Mmhm. "Comrades"."

He tilted his head at the other Russia, "So, how did you two meet?"

"Oh, I knew him for a while, I guess, " Russia shrugged. "I just didn't know him know him. We got stuck doing a school project together, and he just never left."

He smiled at the end, reflecting back on some moments the two had gone through. Man, they had been through a lot, it was hard to think that it all started because both of them were late to a class.

"Either way, he's the closest friend I have. How did you and your America meet?"

Ruski laughed at the memory and shook his head. "Well in the story we met at a coffee shop, but in actuality, we met because Meri's dog is insane. Basically, I was walking to IKEA to get a dresser or something and then America's dog slammed into to me and just attacked me in kisses and it was so confusing. And when I looked up - there he was. Trying not to laugh as I was being assaulted by his dog."

There was a blink of confusion before Galaxy's Russia asked, "Wait what do you mean by story?"

Ruski froze and laughed awkwardly, running a hand through his hair.

"ANYWAY, uh, when did you realise you were gay?" he just wanted to say something to avoid the subject of 'hey! you're actually just in a fanfiction!'. He didn't mean to say something so stupid but hey, it would probably shift the conversation well.

"Whoa, wait. No, I'm-I'm not gay." Russia, who was about to press the other further, was caught off guard by the assumption. "I told you, I'm the Russia who is just friends with America. Comrades."

Ruski rolled his eyes, "Yea. Sure. Tell me, have you ever had a crush before? On a girl?"

The fact he had to think about it should have been a giveaway to Russia, but he ignored it like any other sign. "Well, no, but I didn't really care for things like that. I didn't have the time too." He decided to leave out the fact that people didn't really like him much for anything like that, anyway. "I must have when I was younger, I just don't remember it."

"Ok," Ruski nodded. "And how do you feel when America's around? Annoyed? Sad? Angry? Happy? What?"

"Annoyed's a good word for it, " Russia smiled with a chuckle, but realized that counteracted what he said. He quickly shoved his hands into his pockets and grumbled to himself, "I guess he makes me happy. Or something."

"Yea?" Ruski smirked. "And you said he's your closest friend right? Most people have a lot of close friends. I do. Do you think any of your other friends as close to you as him?"

He didn't even need to think about that, he knew Ame was the closest country to him. But then he thought about how close they actually were. "That. That doesn't mean anything. It just means that we are really close friends."

"Have you done things with him that you would never imagine doing with anyone else?" Ruski asked, leaning on the arm of a nearby couch. "Or maybe there are things you want to do but you would only feel comfortable doing them with him?"

Russia furrowed his eyebrows together, his eyes darting as he analyzed all his thoughts. Had he? Ame was the only one he trusted to be alone in his house, outside his family, and the only person he actually felt comfortable with the knowledge of his depression, his scars, and cuts. He was the only one who could regularly sleep next to him, or curl up in his lap and Russia would be fine with it. Fine, if not feeling somewhat weird and different about it. He wouldn't do that with anyone else and the thought of America doing that with someone else made his stomach churn and his hands curl into fists.

"All of that doesn't matter, cause we are friends, he is the gay one, not me." Russia tried to remind his look-alike, and most importantly himself.
Ruski hummed, crossing his arms, "Are you sure about that? Don't act like there aren't hickies on your neck."

His eyes widened and he quickly slapped his hand over his neck, covering the marks he now remembered where there. A clear red hue covered his cheeks as he managed to get out, "Those aren't what they look like!"

"Oh, yea? Want to tell me what happened then?" Ruski smirked.

"Not particularly, нет." He adjusted his shirt and ushanka to try and hide his neck but it was useless. "It was just alcohol, so nothing happened."

Ruski raised an eyebrow smugly, "But did you want something to happen?"

"I mean, maybe, but that doesn't have to mean anything, we were drunk!" Russia let out a deep sigh and pinched the bridge of his nose. He'd rather not think of that night right then and there, it won't let him win this argument. He crossed his arms and tried to turn the conversation away a little bit, just enough for him to gain

ground to get the upper hand. "Why are you pushing for something that isn't there anyway?"

"Because something is clearly there and everyone can see it but you," Ruski groaned, shaking his head. "And at this point, I just feel bad for your America. He clearly likes you and you clearly like him and I bet that you love spending time with him and all the stuff I do with my Meri. And your denial is actually just making me annoyed at this point."

"I'll take annoying another version of myself as a win, " Russia chuckled to himself but the weakness of it hurt worse than any blade. He sighed and looked to where both Americas had run off, to do who knows what.

"It's all just confusing, " he explained, moving to sit down on the couch. "I mean, my dad, he taught me differently, and going against what I know just feels...wrong? What did you do? You seem to be fine dating a guy."

Ruski nodded solemnly, sitting down on the couch beside him, leaning back with a sigh. "I. I honestly don't know. My father was probably never as homophobic as yours. I've heard some USSRs even try to kill their kids because of it. My dad is. Well, he's actually married to a man. When I was younger he was not too keen on such things but his now-husband changed him. Like America changed me."

Ruski turned to his doppelganger, "From one Russia to another, I have to admit, I never would have thought I was gay when I was younger. I took someone pointing it out to me as well."

He opened his mouth to protest against being gay, but the words got caught in his throat. Then he just covered his face with his hands and set his elbows on his knees. Since he couldn't find any words to say, he just let out a low groan.

"I like America. I don't know if I want to be happy or feel like I lost a battle." He joked slightly, hopefully having that said out loud would help him feel a little better. Of all countries, it had to be America.

Ruski grinned victoriously and pat him on the back, "Welcome to the real world, Russia. It's a lot better than the closet, I promise you."

He leaned back and chuckled, "So...do you think you'll tell him that? Or wait out the feelings like a little bitch?"

"Did you just call me a little bitch?" Russia sat up and glared at the other, feeling as if he was speaking to a mirror. A strange funhouse mirror.

The other Russia grinned, not scared in the slightest, "Sure did. It takes a man to admit to others when he was wrong. At this point, you're a bit more than a child."

"Fuck you." Russia rolled his eyes, but leaned back into the couch and uncrossed his arms. He felt like a weight had been lifted off of him, and things he denied made more sense. But did he want to say anything about this to America? He was his friend, too. Was it worth jeopardizing what he had, for something that could possibly go horribly wrong?

"What's your world like?" Russia decided to let everything sink in a little longer before he did anything rash.

Russia thought for a bit, staring up at the high ceiling. He couldn't tell him about the fact that everyone was in a fanfiction. That's something too crazy to talk about. So which world would he tell him about? The real world or the acted, fanfiction world?

"Well," Ruski inhaled. "I uh have a stepbrother. Aaaand a little brother that you probably don't have. And my father's alive. And I. Oh!"

"We also have things called disguises so that monoskins - I mean humans - don't target us," He reached for the back of his neck and felt around for the button in his skin, but hesitated a bit, thinking it through as his face reddened. "It's a really private thing to remove your disguise in front of someone, so, uh, that's why I got so. Embarrassed. About when America did it. It's like being naked, I guess."

Russia rubbed the back to his neck, wondering if there was anything he hadn't noticed before. There wasn't, but he nodded along with what this Russia was telling him anyway.

"We kind of have something similar. Some countries have wings, and those are very private and very precious but some have been attacked and used for them. Most countries that do have wings, they tend to have a certain gift or power that comes with them. And 'cause of that, only the people closest to the country can know about them." He decided to not bring up his other siblings that have them, and are open about it because it didn't feel like information that he could have a right to spread. If they wanted anyone else to know, they would have to tell them themselves.

"But your dad, " Russia frowned, "he's alive?"

Ruski nodded with a calm smile, "He sure is. Far happier than he ever was. We're one big family now. Just a bunch of people. So many. Maybe too many."
His expression dropped as he looked over at Russia, "I'm guessing...yours isn't?"

Russia looked down and shook his head no. Not wanting to get into that, even with another version of himself, he decided to hold that back and ask, "what is he like?"

Ruski nodded slightly in understanding and offered a smile instead of touching him at all, knowing that he usually didn't like getting hugs from anyone except Meri and his dad.

"He's cheerful and a bit pushy. Always tough and strong and carrying around his kids and husband because he's a show-off," Ruski chuckled. "I don't like to tell him my problems because the poor man worries so much. When I was younger I had a lot of problems - shit I still have problems, I just hide them better now. But yea. He's great. He's a good dad."

Russia smiled at the memories of his own father. Some weren't particularly good, he'll admit to that, but the ones he held onto through the years reminded him of everything good that had happened when times were tough.

"He was, " Russia smiled and patted his pockets. He hadn't let go of it since he got it. "He kept a journal, and America held onto it until a little bit ago. I haven't finished it yet, but it's nice to have some part of him with me again."
Russia pulled out the journal and held it in his hands, rubbing his thumb over the leather cover as he had been doing since he had gotten it.

"Man," Ruski said, looking at the journal. "You look like you could use an America hug."

"Yeah, I guess I can say out loud now I like getting those, " Russia bit his lip nervously and blushed. Admitting anything still made him feel weird.

Ruski chuckled and shook his head, standing up. "Man, where are those two anyway?"

Meanwhile, with the Americas, Meri was putting on Ame's shirt with a laugh, "Are you sure this is gonna work? Cus I dunno about your Russia but mine could pick me out of a crowd with a single glance."

"Oh I have zero confidence about this, but let's pretend I do and like we got this." Ame adjusted the new clothes to try and mimic the style Meri wore. They had both decided for simplicity, dubbing each other as Meri, the America who had magic camouflage skin, and Ame the country with the closeted Russia. "Any important things I need to know?"

Meri thought as he smoothed out Ame's shirt, tilting his head, "Weeeeell. My dog's name is Rascal if he asks, and the password is Bobby Best Boy Bob. Don't ask, it's not important."

"Oh, and don't bring up sex. Like at all. That's a bad idea. Ruski gets really embarrassed," Meri giggled.

Ame giggled with him and hummed to himself, trying to think if there is anything important. "Okay, for my Russia, change the subject if he brings up something about caves, oh and whisper ra ra Rasputin randomly to him it's fucking great. And I would say flirt

with him cause that makes him all blushy, but if you do I will fight you."

Meri shrugged with a smile, helping Ame by straightening out his collar. He had worn Ruski's only flannel today because he ran out of clean shirts to wear and what are boyfriends for if not to share clothes? It ended up being a good thing too because Ame didn't have the same stomach markings as he did.

"Eh, don't worry, that won't be a problem. If you don't fuck with mine, I won't fuck with yours. Although - can I make fun of the fact that he's clearly gay?"

"Yes, I have a feeling we are all going to be doing that, " Ame smiled, stifling his laughter. He looked over Meri, making sure that he looked natural. The clothes he wore were Russia's too, the sweater he had refused to take off and the jeans he had lent him. It looked big and shaggy on him, which was perfect. "We good, we got this?" Ame held up two thumbs up as a mini pep talk and question at the same time.

"Hell yea! We're bad bitches," Meri beamed, grabbing Ame's arm and looping it through his own, starting to walk back over to where they left their Russias. "We are gonna go over there and they're gonna be SO fooled, it's gonna be great."

"Hell yeah, it is!" Ame laughed, giving the other a high-five. "What did they even talk about? Oooh, some Russia secrets?〜"

"Knowing my Russia, he would have been trying REAL hard to get yours to admit he's gay - like to the point where he might have gotten murdered," Meri mock-frowned. "I hope he didn't get murdered. But I wouldn't be surprised--"

"Trust me, it takes a lot to take my Russia down. So if they were fighting, they would be neck in neck and probably ready to do anything to win. In fact, my Russia has a pocket knife on him at all times-" Ame paused and a look of horror and shock came across his face. "Oh God, he has a knife on him at all times we gotta make sure they aren't killing each other!"

He held onto the other tightly and started running back towards where the Russias had been left.

"RUSSIA, RUSSIA, WE'RE HERE TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T KILL EACH OTHER CUS WE LOVE-- what the fuck."
Ruski looked up at them confused, frozen halfway through putting his ushanka on top of the other Russia's ushanka to make an ushanka tower.

"Uh. Hi?"

"You two aren't trying to kill each other?" Ame asked an eyebrow raised pointing between the two. He recognized his Russia trying to steady himself to make sure the hats didn't fall.

"What does it look like to you?"

Ame looked to Meri and shrugged. Guess he overreacted?

Meri chuckled and walked over to the two, grabbing a flower from one of the vases and balancing it on Russia's head, nodding at his handiwork.

Ruski chuckled, crossing his arms and leaning back, "Nice."

Meri got an evil look on his face as he bent down and whispered in Russia's ear, "Ra Ra Rasputin."

Russia tensed up and visibly cringed, the flower almost falling off his head. "America, I told you to never remind me of that."

Ame held back a laugh, knowing very well that Russia had but technically he found a loophole. "Aww, you two have a song, that's pretty gay Russia." Ame cooed.

"Well he's clearly gay for me, I mean it's obvious," Meri giggled, sprawling himself on Russia's lap but backing sure not to lean into him too much.

Ruski whistled, tensing as he sat up, "That is some amazing balance, Russia."

"It would be better if you fucked off for a minute." Russia looked towards Meri but kept his balance straight.

Ame, figuring that hostility was actually meant for him, shook his head and click his tongue. "Such hostility, you should never treat your boyfriend like that."

Ruski snickered, holding out his hand to Ame to high five, "Nice."

Meri smirked and stretched out a bit more, "Y'know, I don't think I will. It's nice and comfy down here~"

Ame high fived Ruski, giving a small wink to Meri as a little signal of everything going smooth so far. As long as they don't give any reason for the two to be suspicious everything will be fine.

Russia's face grew red as he remembered when America had used that excuse to sit in his lap and watch TV with him. He swallowed the lump in his throat and focused on staying steady instead.

Ruski narrowed his eyes at his hand, looking up at Ame and down at his hand, before looking over at Meri on Russia's lap.

"Huh."

"Russssiaaaaaa~" Meri purred. "Pay attention to meeeeeee!"

Russia looked down at the America in his lap and raised a brow. "You're asking the wrong Russia for that."

Meri groaned and rolled onto the floor, "Damnit! It lasted like a second. HOW ARE YOU TWO SO OBSERVANT?"

Ruski just chuckled and picked his America up off the floor, kissing his forehead, "I figured it out the second the other America high-fived me."

"Ohhhhhhh, you're right. I should have warned him about that," Meri bit his lip and sighed.

"And I knew it the minute you tried to sit in my lap. And didn't take the bait for an obvious Hazbin Hotel reference." Russia took off

Ruski's hat and handed it back to him.

"Wait, the fuck?" Ame looked at his hand. "What's wrong with my hand?"

Ruski happily positioned his ushanka on his head, "The problem with your hand is that it's not holding Russia's."

Meri snorted and lightly whacked his shoulder, shaking his head, "Nah, it's because Ruski and I have an inside joke where we don't actually high five, we miss each other's hands in a really dumb dramatic way."

Ruski awkwardly pointed to Ame, "Also, sorry, but can Meri have my shirt back?"

"Oh yeah sure, " Ame took off the flannel, not caring if he was shirtless or not. Russia turned away, the rose still in his hand and decided to focus on the petals instead. Little did he know that his face began to match the same shade as the flower.

"Here ya go, can I have my Russia's sweater back too?"

"Yea, of course!" Meri smiled. "Smells weird anyway."

Taking the flannel from Ame's hand and chucked it over Ruski's face, making the taller chuckle, Meri stripped the sweater off him. He handed it over to Ame and looked at his pants.

"I'd say can I have my pants back, but I think we should save that until later," he chuckled, taking the flannel off of Ruski's head and buttoning it up.

"Yeah, don't wanna fluster these boys too much, " Ame chuckled and looked over at Russia. "Ain't that right pretty boy?~"

Knowing who he was talking to, Russia tensed up and looked up nervously. He cleared his throat and tried to pull off his whatever look, but he knew it was pointless with his reddened cheeks.

"I dunno, Ame, I kinda like seeing mine all red and flustered~" Meri purred, leaning into his own blushing Russia, stroking a finger

down his jaw and ending at his chin. "What if I just left my shirt unbuttoned for you hmm, baby?~"

Ruski looked away in embarrassment, clearing his throat, "You mean my shirt."

Ame got a devilish grin and pulled the neckline of the sweater down a little bit to show off a bit of his shoulder and collar bone then proceeded to walk to his Russia, who noticed his approach and froze.

"I like seeing this, too.~" Ame said as he sat in Russia's lap, wrapping his arms around Russia's neck. Russia's face grew redder and he glanced over at Ruski as a silent plea for help. He had been the one to point everything out, he better be the one to get him out.

Ruski looked over at Russia's scared expression and bit his lip to stifle a laugh. He looked back to Meri, who had noticed the other Russia's face, rolling his eyes and pecking Ruski's lips and letting him go.

Ruski walked over to Ame and Russia, picking up the other's America and throwing him over his shoulder. "You're welcome."

"Thanks."

"Oi, what the hell, " Ame kicked his legs and tried to get out of Ruski's hold. "No, I refuse, no consent!"

Russia stuck out his tongue at Ame, to which he returned.

"Why do you get to flirt with your boyfriend but I can't with mine?" He pouted.

Ruski chuckled, "I'd love to let you do that but he's having too much of a gay panic right now. Maybe just say all your flirty stuff from over here and we'll see how he handles it."

Meri walked over and wrapped his arms around Ruski's waist, burying his face in his side, making Ruski smile and lovingly pet his hair with a free hand.

"Fiiiiine. That's not as fun, though," Ame puffed out his bottom lip as a mock pout but then looked at Russia. He was playing with his hands nervously, debating whether it was even necessary to tell Ame anything. As confused, flustered and anxious as he was, he wasn't stupid.

"Russia.~" Ame purred, catching the other's attention. "How's not being gay doing for you, hmm?"

"Oh it's going great, " Russia stood and twirled the rose in his hand.

"Russia, why don't you tell him what you figured out today?" Ruski smirked. Meri looked up at him in confusion before he whispered what they had talked about in his ear, making Meri grin and wiggle his eyebrows at Russia.
Ame, looked down at the two confused, then towards Russia who began to rub his neck nervously. He kept his gaze down and just slowly took baby-sized steps towards Ame.

"Oh, I'm not drunk enough for this."

"And I'm not informed enough for this, what's going on?" Ame asked hoping to get an answer. "Was it a bad idea to leave you two alone?"

"Not at all, it was probably the best decision you've ever made," Ruski put Ame down, stepping back with a smile. Meri slipped his hand into Ruski's, resting his head on his shoulder. Ruski rested his head on Meri's and wrapped his arm around his shoulders, kissing his hair.

Russia looked at the two and smiled. He knew Ame liked him, he had stopped flirting with everyone else and only did it to Russia, so rejection wasn't what he was worried about. It was about it all being real.

"Okay, now I'm getting nervous." Ame looked over his shoulder for a second then looked up at Russia.

"America, I. I um, " he looked at the rose in his hand and quickly held it out in his direction. "America, I like you!"

He shut his eyes and tensed his shoulders, feeling awkward and like there were a thousand more people watching him admit to his feelings. His eyes shot open as he felt his shirt collar get grabbed and he was pulled down. His face hovered right in front of Ame's and he saw him looking at him, his sunglass pulled down a little so he could look into his black eyes.

"I like you too," Ame said before filling the gap between them and kissing him.

Ruski clapped and Meri cheered, jumping around and whooping. He grabbed some more flowers and handed some to Ruski. He plucked out some rose petals and threw them over the two, cheering like a crazy person at a football game as Ruski threw some as well.

Russia hasn't noticed what the other two were doing and instead lifted Ame up, who wrapped his legs around his waist and his arms around Russia's neck. For the small moment, everything had disappeared and all that there was, was them. Ame and his desperate hold, keeping the two locked in the kiss, while Russia held on delicately, the tension in his shoulder fading away and allowing him to melt into the kiss.

When they broke apart, they barely moved away from each other. Ame smiled and buried his head under Russia's chin and stayed where he was. Russia rubbed Ame's head with his cheek before looking up at the other two and noticing the petals everywhere.

"Um."

Ruski held up his hand and Meri made a gesture like he was trying to slap his hand but missed, the two grinning.
When they saw Russia looking at them, Ruski gave him a thumbs up and Meri shot him some finger guns, shouting at them, "Y'all are cute!!"

"Fuck yeah we are, " Ame threw his fist into the air. "Now where's a bedroom, I need to prove I'm dom."

"Whoa, hold on now, baby steps, " Russia laughed, but his face grew warm again. "I just had my first kiss I don't think I can handle

anything else."

"Awwwww, I was your first kiss.~"

"Oh shush, I'm still not scared to drop you." He chuckled and he felt Ame tighten his grip on Russia.

"20 bucks Ame's gonna top," Meri grinned at Ruski.

"I'll take you on that bet. You haven't even been able to top me yet and it's been two years," Ruski snickered.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Meri purred. "Don't you remember Christmas last year?"

Ruski blushed, "I was drunk, that doesn't count!"

"Oh please, your cup was full of water," Meri giggled, poking out his tongue. Ruski's eyes widened in realisation as his cheeks burned an even brighter red.

"I wondered why it tasted so bland..."

Russia gave a light chuckle, still finding everything a little embarrassing to talk about. He didn't need to have any images in his head right there and then, mainly cause he was still reeling from the kiss.

"Don't worry, he won't top me at all." Russia nodded towards Ruski, making Ame frown.

"Won't my ass, just watch me!"

"Shush we'll settle this later. Not that there is much to settle anyways."

"Y'all better fuck or Imma be pissed," Meri retorted, crossing his arms. Ruski hit his arm, wide-eyed.

"America! Stay out of their sex life, Jesus."

"Give us a room and we'll do it right now." Ame began to look

around, thinking even a closet would do. And the irony of that would be perfect.

"Nope, that's enough of your horny ass for right now." Russia threw Ame over his shoulder, making him yelp in surprise. "Americans, they never stop, do they?"

"They don't know how," Ruski chuckled, shaking his head. Meri pouted and threw his arms around Ruski's neck.

"Russssiiaaaaaaaaa!!" Meri whined.

"What?"

Meri pouted, "I'm horny now too."

"AMERICA!!" Ruski yelped, his face bright red as he tried to duck away with Meri laughing hysterically.

"I vote we tied them down somewhere and wait until they get out of heat," Russia suggested raising his hand a little as if he were a kid in class.

"Oh, bondage already?" Ame chuckled kicking his legs a little. "My, Russia you are pretty kinky. Do you want me to call you daddy again?~"

"AMERICA!" Russia blushed and quickly covered his mouth with his free hand.

Ruski tensed, his face going extremely red. He sent Russia a pleading look as Meri's eyes went half-lidded, his hand twirling in Russia's hair, making the taller's breath hitch in his throat.

"Did that bring up a memory, daddy~?" Meri purred, rubbing his leg on Russia's.

"NOPE," Russia picked Meri up and threw him over his shoulder, wanting to melt from how hot his face felt. "I agree with the tying idea. Or maybe lock them in a room to cool off."

"Good idea, where's a room?" Russia looked around. "A room that

maybe doesn't lead to another dimension. That's what I'm assuming most of these doors lead to."

Ame pouted and looked down. He realized Russia's ass was right in hand's reach and to see what would happen, he slid his hands into his pants.

Russia jumped and gasped, quickly pulling a laughing Ame off of him. "Aww, you should see your face right now."

Meri grinned evilly and sucked on Ruski's neck making him give an undignified screech, pulling Meri away as well.

"Америка, НЕТ." (Russian: America, NO.)

Meri pouted, "But daddyyyyy~"

"Nope, no, absolutely not," Ruski lifted Meri to sit him around his shoulders, AWAY from his neck. He tried to pull his ushanka down over his eyes to hide a blush. "There's - uh - there's a bathroom over there. We can lock them in there."

"Oh, better idea. You two take the bathroom and we can take the couch." Ame suggested, trying to turn his head to see what the other America would think.

"America, нет," Russia's tone warned him not to continue, but his blush did little to assert any seriousness.

"Why? You scared?" Ame teased, tracing his fingers over the hickies that were still very visible.

Russia shuddered and shakily said, "Нет."

"Awwwwww, poor boy is worried," Meri cooed, leaning his head on his hands that were on Ruski's head. "You heard him: you were his first kiss~"

Ruski opened his mouth to defend Russia but before he could Meri snaked a hand under his ushanka to play with his soft hair, making him shiver.

"Just cause you said it doesn't mean I won't drop him, " Russia tried to go back his original idea of threats to get the upper hand again, but it was too late for that.

"You won't do it, admit it, you like holding me." Ame grabbed Russia's shoulders, bring them closer together and making Russia jump. "But holding me closer is better."

"That must be the same for Ruski here because he could have just popped me on the ground and kept me away," Meri tugged on Ruski's hair a little which made him jump and swallow hard. "But instead he put me up here where I can play to his weaknesses."

Meri looked over at Ame, smirking, "It's almost as if they want us to tease them huh?～"

Russia turned his head away and held his lips pressed together tightly. His response and lack of denial made Ame smirk and he got close enough to wrap his legs around his waist again, making Russia have to grab his thighs and hold him.

"Do you like being teased, Ruski?" Ame whispered, getting closer to his face, his eyes exposed and half-lidded. He knew Russia had a soft spot for his eyes and liked seeing them, so Ame knew to use that to his advantage. It worked and he felt Russia shudder and his grip tighten on his thighs. More importantly, he didn't try to push him away.

Meri took Ruski's hat off with an unoccupied hand and positioned it on his own head. He wrapped his arms around Ruski's neck and buried his face into his soft, fluffy hair and planted kisses all over his scalp. Ruski sighed contentedly and held one of Meri's hands, resisting the urge to shake his head.

Ame wrapped his arms around Russia, kissing his cheek and planting smaller ones leading down to his jawline where he nibbled the skin a little. Without realizing he was doing it, Russia shut his eyes and tilted his head up allowing Ame more room to have at his neck.

Meri leaned down to Ruski's ear and whispered, "Maybe we should

let them have some alone time~"

Ruski opened his eyes to look at the other two and stifled a laugh, nodding as he held onto Meri's legs, walking towards another couch (facing away from the doppelgangers) and setting him down. He sat on the couch next to him and wrapped his arms around his waist, Meri cuddling into his side with a happy smile.

The other two didn't notice or really hear them. Ame started to try and make more hickies on Russia's neck, knowing if he had control from the start he can prove to Russia that he can top and that he can bottom. It seemed to be working, Russia's breathing growing heavier and he pushed himself closer to Ame in hopes of getting more pleasure.

He was wrapped around the smaller country's finger at this point.

Meri smiled being cuddled by Ruski, before realising something.

"Oh shit, Rus," Meri looked up at his boyfriend. "If they do that shit out here we're gonna hear it. Oh, and also if the girls come back they're gonna see that--"

Ruski blushed and his eyes widened, leaning his arm up on the side of the couch, yelling over his shoulder, "I'm happy for you two and all that but get a room!!"

Ame picked his head up at the realization that he and Russia were still in the hallway. He cleared his throat, blushing from the embarrassment of that.

"Uh yeah, where's that bathroom?"

"Over here, " Russia motioned towards the door Ruski had said was a bathroom. He regained his sense of direction and reality, adjusted his hold on Ame and started taking him into the other room. Now that he realized what had started happening, he knew he wasn't going to be a bottom and America was going to have to deal.

Meri chuckled and shook his head, "Gosh I can't believe you bullied that Russia into fucking his best friend. You're so bad Russie~"

Ruski rolled his eyes and smiled, "I learned from the best~"

Meri giggled and cupped his cheek, pulling him in for a kiss. Ruski smiled into the kiss and when they pulled away he tucked Meri under his chin, breathing in the smell of soda and apple pie.

Inside the bathroom, Russia set Ame down on his feet so he could close the door and make sure it was locked. When he turned around, Ame grabbed his shirt and pulled him down for a kiss. Russia complied, but instead of letting Ame do what he wanted, he grabbed his wrists and pinned him to a wall, kissing him hard. Ame opened his eyes wide and was filled with surprise, but was not complaining.

Ame was left a blushing, panting mess when Russia pulled away from the kiss. He may not have been as skilled about it, which was expected, but damn he still managed to make it hot. He looked up to see the shadowed focus expression of Russia, his eyes trained and focused in on him, looking as if he was analyzing his options. He tended to overthink, or stop to think too much, and under normal circumstances, Ame would have used that against him and asserted his dominance, but the feeling of being held down and not having that much control excited him. He didn't want to fight it at the moment.

Russia lifted Ame into the air, holding him against the wall and started to tenderly lick and suck at his neck. He traced circles with his tongue, feeling Ame's reaction to each movement. When he squirmed more than he had at any other place on his neck he began to quickly bite and suck at the skin.

Back in the hall, Meri and Ruski jumped as they heard one of the various walls shatter, pulling their heads up from behind the couch to see who was coming in.

Ella and Morning walked in, hands intertwined as the wall behind them reformed. Ella had a handmade flower crown resting on her newly short hair and Morning had small flowers braided into a strip of her hair. They were laughing about something, maybe a joke, and had their eyes closed so they didn't see the two on the couch yet.

The two ducked their heads, Meri biting his lips as he looked over at his boyfriend.

"What do we do??" Meri whispered.
Ruski shrugged, "I guess we talk to them? Maybe stall them?"

Morning finished laughing, and a story popped into her head and as soon as it did, she started to say, "Oh, this one time, there's was this stray cat that lived by our house and he only approached me, but I must have scared him cause he ended up scratching me right by my eye and it started bleeding so much - who are you?"

She interrupted herself and pointed to the two on the couch, positioning herself in front of Ella.

"I'm sorry, the cat did WHAT??" Ella asked, grabbing Morning's shoulders and analysing her face for any scratches or scars.

Meri chuckled awkwardly, waving slightly as Ruski cleared his throat. Ella swivelled around and crossed her arms.

"America? Russia? What are you two doing here??" She looked over to her wall. "Did I leave the wall open?!?"

"No, no, don't worry, we just snuck in," Meri waved his hand. "Soooooooooo, how are you twooooooooooo?"

"Oh, these are your Russia and America? Look at them, they are so cute, such wittle babies." Morning walked up to them excitedly, switching to a voice one would use when talking to a child. Which was interesting, since both of them were obviously older and taller than her.

"Oh and yeah, I have the scar right here, " she pointed to her right eye where the small indentation was. "I freaked out everyone when I walked inside the house with blood dripping down my face."

Before Ella could panic about her accident-proneness more, she turned back to the two and asked, "Why are you two here?"

"Oh well we were bored," Meri grinned, shrugging. He held out his hand to shake Morning's before Ruski put it down. "I'm guessing

you're that Morning girl Mystery's always talking about?"

"Yes I am, it's very nice to meet you, " Morning smiled and folded her hands in front of her. Normally she'd opt to shake the person's hand she was being introduced to, but this Russia didn't seem too keen on doing that.

She smiled and looked over at Ella, cooing, "Awww you talk about me?~"

"Oh shush, you know I do," Ella giggled, hitting her shoulder lightly. "So what have you two been doing here this whole time? Just cuddling like the gays you are?"

Meri opened his mouth to refute when a noise was heard from the bathroom, both countries tensing and looking at each other in fear.

"Ow, not so hard, " Ame rubbed arm. Russia, per Ame's request, had moved him to be sat down on the bathroom sink so Russia didn't have to hold him up. They both knew it would allow him to use his hands, but he had accidentally made Ame hit his arm on something.

"Sorry." Russia winced slightly but worked on getting the sweater off of Ame.

"Uh, what was that?" Morning raised a brow, looking towards the door. She noticed the two tense up and knew something was up. "Who is in there?"

"NO ONE. NO ONE AT ALL, THERE'S NOTHING SUSPICIOUS WE SHOULD ALL GO NOW," Meri grabbed Morning's shoulders and started to wheel her away from the door, Ruski doing the same with Ella.

"You are acting very shady, and I don't trust America when it's like that. Morning, bent down and spun out If Meri's grip and started hurrying over to the door.

Meri dashed in front of the door, looking extremely stressed as he held out his arms to barricade Morning from the bathroom.

"NO! DON'T GO IN THERE!"

Ella crossed her arms and stuck out her hip with a frown, "Why not?"

"There's - uh - there's a monster in there!" Ruski rushed to find an excuse, joining Meri in barricading the two from the door.

"Yea! It - uh - it ran out of one of the walls!" Meri continued. "A-a-and we locked it in here! So don't go in there!"

"I don't believe you two at all, but if there is a monster, we can handle it, " Morning motioned to Ella and herself. Then she blinked and felt her anxiety spike for a moment. "I'm assuming, " she turned to Ella for answers, "can authors handle things like this in this place?"

Inside the bathroom, Russia stopped doing what he was doing and looked to the door. He heard voices outside, close and sounding female. Ame, who hadn't noticed, whined when Russia stopped giving him kisses between his thighs.

"Russia, I can't do anymore teasing just fuck me please."

Ella thought for a second, biting her lip and furrowing her brows, "I don't...know? I mean. Ok, why don't we just try to open the door? With like. Author powers. If it works, that means we can fix the monster, and if they don't, the monster's still locked in there. Win-win!"

Meri gulped and exchanged an 'oh god' glance with Ruski.

Morning nodded then focused on the door and snapped her fingers. The doorknob twisted and the door opened. Cool they can do it. But now time to fight a monster, ace!

When Morning looked into the room, she yelled, "oh God!" Then she slapped her hand over her eyes and turned away.

"What the hell!" Ame shouted, more annoyed about the invasion of privacy than the sight of someone he didn't know. Russia quickly covered Ame but standing in front of him.

Ella blinked, confused at what she was seeing. Once she realised

what the hell she was seeing she yelped and covered her face, pointing her head at the floor.

Meri ran in and threw his flannel over Ame's body, looking slightly annoyed, "Didn't you hear us out there?? We were trying to warn you!!"

Ruski ran in as well and slammed the door shut, knowing it wouldn't solve much since the two had magic bullshit powers, but it provided him with some peace of mind.

"Sorry," he said to Russia, averting his gaze. "We're really bad at stalling."

"Who the hell are they?" Russia asked fixing his shirt and ushanka. He also awkwardly folded his hands over his lap, trying to be inconspicuous about it.

"They looked like the girls we saw earlier," Ame noted, getting Russia's sweater back on.

"They're - uh - well - they're like," Ruski stumbled through an explanation, confused on how to explain the whole fanfiction thing for like the third time in an hour.

"They're basically gods," Meri finished, saving his boyfriend's ass as he fixed Ame's sweater to try to hide the hickies. "The one with the long hair is the god of your universe, which means she basically plans out what you do. I don't think she wanted you two together yet judging by the state of Russia's denial when he got here."

Ruski sighed in relief at Meri's quick thinking and smiled at his boyfriend, who grinned and winked back.

"Gods?" Russia looked shocked and felt slightly horrified. He didn't know how to even react to being presented with such an idea, one that was right behind the door. "Are they the reason we ended up here?"

"She didn't want us together?" Ame looked at the door then to Russia. "Well, why the hell not? She's just going to have to deal

with it, cause whether she likes it or not Russia is mine." He jumped up and grabbed ahold of Russia's arm, holding it close to him.

Meri 'aww'd and Ruski smiled sadly, leaning back on the door with his arms crossed.

"I'm sorry to say we never really know what they want or why they want it," Ruski admitted. "Although, she seemed to like Meri and I being together so maybe she just wants to build up some...sexual tension maybe? Who fucking knows."

Outside the door, Morning turned to Ella in a panic and began to ramble nervously, "This is bad, this is bad, this wasn't supposed to happen yet. I'm not even sure if I wanna go back in there, it's one thing writing or reading it, it's another thing seeing it!"

Ella was just pretty much speechless. Morning was definitely right, it was one thing seeing words on a page, another seeing two countries in a heated situation. She just stared at the ground, trying to find the words to get herself out of this weird-ass situation.

"Okay, okay." Morning took in a deep breath and tried to calm herself down. "My characters, my business, I have to fix this. Everything is fine."

Her voice still shook but she turned to the door and pushed it open thankful that the two were fully clothed again. And from what she, regretfully, saw nothing happened happened.

Ella walked in after her and clapped her hands loudly, pretending she didn't see what she fucking saw. "Alrighty, gang! This was never fucking supposed to happen so how 'bout we just wipe your memories and go on our merry ways, yea? Sound good? Great!"

"What, no!" Ame shouted, holding onto Russia tighter. "I finally got him to admit he liked me, and kiss me! You know how long that took me?!"

"I know, I wrote it, " Morning pinched the bridge of her nose. "Okay, I'm very sorry about what I have to do, but for story reasons, you two can not remember this."

Russia looked down at America protectively holding his arm, looking furiously at the girl. He was so caught up in everything he hadn't realized he wasn't wearing his glasses. It didn't seem like the two girls even cared about that difference.

"We can't stop you can we?"

Morning looked to Ella then solemnly shook her head no. "If it helps, you do get together. Just not like this."

Ella rubbed her arm, "Should we tell them how it happens? Y'know, since they're gonna have their memory wiped anyway?"

Meri put his hand on Ella's arm, making her jump slightly, "Ella, please, can you just, let them go? Maybe they can do what we do and just act everything out and be lovey dovey in private?"

Ella shook her head, "It's not the same if they know it's gonna happen, Rica. Then all the natural, real tension is gone and it's more jenky and bleh. Plus, what if they tell someone? What do we do if the secret gets out that everything is planned out by us and we're the ones in control, not them? It's too risky."

"I'm really sorry about this, none of this was supposed to happen, " Morning tried to explain but by the look, she was being given from America, he wasn't too happy. "I can tell you that you two do get together. I can't go into specifics, but it ends well I promise."

Russia only nodded along, trying to make peace with what was going to happen. "If we can do this once, we can do it again."

"Russia, what are you-"

"America, " Russia turned to Ame and held him by his shoulders. "Do not give up on me, whatever you do stay the annoying persistent little shit you are."

Ame looked at him, his eyebrows slanted downwards and his mouth slightly open. He realized there was no getting out of this, and if anyone could find a way to it would have been Russia.

"You know me, I won't. Just don't be too stuck in denial for me

huh?" Ame managed to try and make a flirtatious wink but his spirit was a little low.

"I have a way to help you with that, America, " Morning tried to help reassure him.

Meri rolled his eyes and smiled, cupping his hands around his mouth saying, "Just kiss already homos!"

Ruski chuckled and wrapped his arms around Meri's waist, resting his chin in the crook between his neck and his shoulder, kissing his cheek. Meri giggled and reached a hand up to rest on his ushanka. Despite it being a sad farewell, the two were still proud that they had gotten Russia to figure out his feelings in the first place. Or, well, bullying him into it really.

Russia rolled his eyes at what Meri said but kissed Ame anyway, holding them both close together.

"Awww, my gay bois are so cute together, " Morning looked to Ella and grabbed her hand, holding it tightly for reassurance. "I feel so bad."

Ella wrapped her arms around Morning, kissing her forehead to comfort her, "I know. It sucks. But hey, the longer we wait the better it'll feel when they actually get together."

"And," Ruski added. "You make it so that they only forget when they cross the wall and remember as soon as they come back...?"

Ella raised an eyebrow at the idea, turning to Morning, "Can we do that?"

"I can leave out important bits and leave this as some sort of strange dream." Morning suggested.

"You won't know about this place, or them, " she gestured to the other Russia and America, "or us, but I'll leave what can help Russia realize he's gay."

Russia looked down and chewed the inside of his lip. He was very adamant about not being gay, he wasn't entirely sure if it would

work. But it was what they had.

"Does that sound good?"

"Well no, absolutely not," Meri interjected, rolling his eyes. "What would be good is if they could be together but I'm just a character and I have no say in anything but y'know go off I guess."

Ruski shushed Meri in his ear, making him shudder and lean into him, grumbling slightly as his boyfriend planted soft kisses on his cheek and scalp to calm him down.

"I think that means yes," Ella mused with a sad smile.

"Easy come, easy go, " Morning shrugged to hopefully make this less painful than it already was. "They aren't ready yet, but they will be."

"What now?" Russia asked, holding onto America's hand tightly. He couldn't say he wasn't nervous as hell. Most things he has seen in movies, they had been painful. Or had woken up with a severe headache. It must not be too far off from being like a hangover.

"Well, I have to take you back to where we left off, put you guys back where you were and just erase your memories. Oh God, I hope the other one didn't see anything."

Ame blinked. "Other one?"

"Nevermind, that's for later. Come on, let's get out of here." Morning motioned with her head to the hallway and started to pull Ella with her by her hand.

"Wait where are we going?" Ella laughed, Meri and Ruski trailing behind them.

"Out of the bathroom. Room was kind of small." Morning chuckled moving off to the side a little bit so that everyone else could come out. "After I go put the two back, do you want me to come back here? Or should I wait?"

"Maybe we should hold off for a bit after this whole debacle," Ella

chuckled, running a hand through her hair awkwardly. "We don't want to have to clear up any more loose ends."

Morning frowned and rubbed her arm. "Yeah, it's already pretty messed up."

Meri tapped on Ruski's shoulder and when the taller looked down at him questioningly, he pointed his head over to the other two countries behind them. Ruski nodded and let go of his waist, walking ahead as Meri stopped to let Russia and Ame catch up to him.

Russia noticed Ruski walking ahead a little bit and seen Meri stopped. He took this as him wanting to talk to them. "What is it?"

Meri opened his mouth to speak but shut it again, not quite knowing how to express how he felt. He stopped in front of them as his bottom lip quivered and he threw his arms around the two in a big hug, squeezing his eyes shut to stop any tears.

"I'm so so sorry!! I feel kinda responsible for this I mean we basically forced you together and now you're gonna get ripped apart and it's not fair and I'm so so so so sorry!"

Ame returned the hug just as tightly, Russia wrapping his arms around the two since he was big enough for it.

"It's okay, or it'll be okay. I got the small moment to be with him and I know that we will end up together."

"Eventually," Russia added and knew that both Americas were getting choked up about everything, and he himself was feeling the pain in his heart but could manage it better so it wouldn't be seen on the outside. "I know I am okay with liking America, so I can trust that things will turn out okay."

"I know we just met like an hour ago but I love you guys!" Meri sobbed, burying his face into Ame's shoulder, knowing that poor Russia was probably hating the hug so it was better to just show most to all of his affection to his other-self. "If you ever need anything, like anything, just hit me up like, you need a Netflix

account? Use mine. Want to bathe in oil? I got some homie. You need someone murdered? I'm your guy."

"Ok, sweetheart, that's a bit much," Ruski chuckled, having now come back to them, worried about Meri. "You won't murder anyone. That's Australia's thing."

"Oh shit," Meri sniffed. "You right."

"Aussies can be scary," Morning muttered looking over at Ella with a playful smile.

"I love you too!" Ame cried with Meri, deciding not to bring up the fact that they won't be able to do any of that, cause one; they don't know how, and two; they were going to be forgetting everything. Those two thoughts made him wail louder.

"Alright, America, it's going to be okay." Russia rubbed Ame's back, unsure about how to confront the other one. When Ame was crying and needed comfort he held onto him until he was okay, but that wasn't going to work now that there was two of them.

"It was very nice getting to know you all. And Ruski?" Russia turned towards the other country. "Can you do something for me?"

"Of course, anything you need," Ruski smiled, rubbing the weeping Meri's back (which just made him cry more).

"Tell your dad you love him." He could feel the journal in his pocket, weighing heavy. "Please."

"I will," Ruski frowned in realisation and stepped a little closer.

"Can I hug you?" He asked in a low voice, not wanting to push Russia too far out of his comfort zone.

Russia looked down at the two Americas crying together and closed his eyes. He nodded and turned to Ruski, feeling the need for some form of comfort and reassurance.

Ruski smiled and wrapped his arms around Russia and the others as best he could. Even though he was the same height as Russia he

leaned his head on his and tucked him into him as best he could, like his father used to do for him when he came out of a night terror.

Ella watched the four countries hugging and crying and being together and wrapped her arms around Morning, burying her face in her hair and swaying them both back and forth slightly.

Russia smiled at the comfort, his eyes growing a little watery as the hold reminded him of his own father. He had always held him in a big hug whenever he got scared or seemed sad, and all the emotions around them made it harder for him to keep his composure.

"This is such a big hug sesh right now and I can't handle it, " Morning said as she wrapped her arms around Ella tightly. She felt horrible about what had to happen but knew that it had to.

"This sucks."

"You could just NOT kill them," Meri sniffed, not letting go of Ame.

"We're not gonna kill them, Meri," Ella said gently, rubbing Morning's back.

"You're BASICALLY killing them," Meri hissed, stroking Ame's head like he was a frightened cat.

"No, I'm not." Morning whined. "And you can't guilt-trip me, I have siblings. I'm immune."

Russia gave everyone one last squeeze before letting go. He had gathered himself a little better and can pull off the look as if he hadn't shed a tear or anything similar. At least he thought, but he rubbed his eyes just in case.
Ruski let go of Russia, smiling at him as he pat his back, "No homo."

"No homo, " Russia laughed as he said it, remembering how he was basically told not to say that.

"It's okay, Meri. We'll be okay." Ame said, appreciating the petting. "Maybe when our thing finally is over we can come back here and get to know each other again."

"We fuckin BETTER, you are my CHILD now," Meri squished his cheeks with a mock-intense stare. "If I ever see you again - no, WHEN I see you again - you are gonna be cherished and protected and smothered to death, you gay little bitch."

"This is why I'm going to miss you, you mother fucker!" Ame smiled and tried not to cry again, instead he laughed and grabbed Meri into a hug, spinning around with him. "You better hold up your promise to me!"

"I absolutely will!! If I don't you have permission to fucking nuke me," Meri laughed, squeezing Ame hard before pulling away slightly to grin at him and wipe some tears from his cheeks. "Or worse - turn me communist!"

Ruski chuckled at how dramatic they were being, nudging Russia with his elbow, "Now I'm worried they're gonna leave us for each other."

Russia laughed, and thought about it. "Okay, there's a chance of that happening and that's scaring me."

He walked over to Ame and picked him up, cradling him close to his chest. He knew America loved himself, but hopefully not that much.

"You done with goodbyes?" Morning asked, a little scared to. She eyed Meri, knowing he was the one who was the most aggressive with everything.

Meri sniffed and nodded, trudging over to Ruski and burying his face in his chest, holding on to his t-shirt and refusing to look at anyone. Ruski enveloped him in a hug and buried his face in his soft, fluffy hair.

Ella smiled and pulled Morning in for a kiss, pulling away and pressing her forehead to hers, "See ya later, Palinpa."

For a moment, Morning's English left her and she said, "Jigwas göhö'geh. Uh I mean, see you later." She laughed off the mistake and almost had to force herself away from the hold of her

girlfriend. It's okay, she'll be back again soon.

"Come on, let's get you two back to Russia's house." She motioned for the two countries to follow her to the wall with her story on the other side. Instead of smashing it with a hammer, cause Ella would freak out about the dangers of that, she just had it crumble like stone.

"Hey, Morning!" Ella called before her girlfriend walked over the barrier. She blew her a kiss and winked, "I love youuuuuuuu~"

"I love you too!~" Morning blew a kiss back and waved by as the wall began to build itself back up. Before it was completely covered, Ame and Russia gave the other two one last wave goodbye.

Meri kept waving even after the wall was built, tearing up again as he realised that Ame would forget everything about him and they'd probably never see each other ever again. Probably the only person in the entirety of all the various multiverses that could really understand him. Never to see him again. And if by some damn miracle they did meet again, it would never be the same. He would never know what he knew; never remember what he remembered.

Ruski put his arm down and looked down at Meri, rubbing his thumb on his cheek.

"You okay?" he whispered.

Meri took a deep breath, looking up at Ruski, his eyes shining with tears.

"He still has my fucking pants."

# Getting Closer

**America's POV**

Russia wouldn't let us leave his bedroom. And for all the wrong reasons.

Instead of having fun, we were sitting quietly, keeping a focus on the bedroom door. The sun had risen already, my stomach was grumbling but Russia wouldn't let us leave.

Once he yawned for the fifth time, I sighed and set down my gun. "Russia, you need to sleep."

He didn't answer me and kept his eyes trained on the door. His eyelids hung heavy, darkened circles starting to deepen under his eyes. His gaze was focused but hazy, drifting off but then snapping back into place.

"Russia, " I set my hand down on his arm and he grunted. "Sleep. You need it, look at you."

"I'm fine."

"Russia."

"You sleep. You need it morrre."

Well America, he's got you there. I did feel exhausted, but it was the dumb kind. The kind of tired you feel but as soon as you try to sleep, you suddenly have the energy to run around the world three times and paint Oregon. I was stuck in that. And since we couldn't paint Oregon, I could defiantly watch the door for Russia.

"We alrrready took nap, I'm fine."

"Yeah, but it didn't feel like it."

"Must have voken up durrring RRREM."

"I don't care, you're tired go to sleep." I tried to get him to let go of the gun, but he held his death grip on it. "You cleared the downstairs, didn't you? Maybe whoever came in left. Or maybe there wasn't anyone at all."

"Nyet."

"Russia, we haven't heard anything."

"Zat doesn't mean someone isn't zerrre."

"Dude, you are paranoid."

"Betterrr parrranoid zan dead."

I sighed and hung my head, rubbing my eyes. "Ruski, just fucking sleep. I can keep an ear out."

"Nyet."

"Well, why the hell not?"

Russia glanced down at me and for a moment his stoic expression softened. He looked almost shy and for a moment I remembered him looking down with a shy uncertain expression but as soon as I remembered it faded away.

"I don't vant whoeverrr it is to attack you."

"I'll be fine," I set my hand on his shoulder. "Sleep. You can't help me if you don't help yourself."

"But-"

"No buts, just sleep."

He hesitated, looking down at me and I saw his eyes study mine. He shut them and sighed and I smiled, knowing I had won.

Without words, he laid down and crossed his arms over his chest, holding onto the gun. He grumbled something but I patted his leg and said, "good boy."

For a while everything was quiet. My eyes wandered around the room but after a moment I would look back at the door. Nothing was happening and I knew nothing would. And damn I was hungry. Like really fucking hungry.

When I knew Russia wouldn't wake up, I slowly began to inch my way off the bed. Every time it squeaked, I froze and waited a few minutes then began to try and get up. Once I could I tiptoed to the door, picked up the vase and moved that and the chair somewhere else then left the room as quietly as I could.

"Whoo," I breathed out deeply and walked slowly and lightly down to the kitchen. I didn't know what I wanted to eat, just fucking something. I settled for some weird looking porridge. The box was in Russian and I held it up to my face, trying to make out the words. It was either some oatmeal kind of shit or weird cereal. Either way, I had seen Russia make it once. I'm sure I can do it again.

As I was getting out a pan to warm up the food, I felt a cold breeze breathe onto my neck. I spun around confused but didn't see anything. My feet and hands started to tingle, the familiar senses of burning once I shivered. There must have been a window open or something.

I went to look for it after I got everything ready and had to wait for the water to boil. There weren't any windows open, not from what I could see at least. I looked to the back door and saw it was closed, but figured it couldn't hurt to try and check it.

I walked over to the door and jiggled the handle, finding it shut and locked. I shrugged thinking that maybe I just felt a draft or something. It was weird, yeah, Russia still had the heat on so probably any normal gust of air would feel cold.

Just as I was about to turn to head back to the kitchen, a faint slow creaking made me freeze in my steps.

Goosebumps ran up and down my arms and I felt my heart began to pick up speed. Right on my right side, there was a dark hallway. This is classic horror movie shit, oh fuck. Damn it, I chased after the

scary thing, fuck oh fuck, I swear to god if I turn and there is a door open I swear to fucking god I am going to fucking run away.

Slowly, I turned my head down the hallway and squinted. There at the end was an open door, the room inside pitch black.

"Uh uh, fuck that," I said and took off running upstairs. As I got halfway up I swore I could hear someone behind me. I yelped and ran faster, jumping up the steps two at a time trying my best to hurry back to Russia. A cold wind rushed my back just as I turned down the hall towards his room.

"Russia!" I yelled just as I opened the door. He was already sat upright, gun in hand pointed at me. I dove to the ground and covered my ears just as the loud gunshot rang out. A flash of blood and fire hit me and I felt the dirt under me as I dove for cover, sweat beating down my skin and soaking my clothes with blood and water. My ears rang as I peeked open my eyes. Still alive, still alive, still fucking alive.

Machine gun fire echoed next to me, muffled by the painful ringing in my ears. My head throbbed, my arm aching from the pain and my vision swayed.

"Amerrrica!"

My vision darkened and I saw fabric in front of me but then it morphed into a torn uniform soaked in blood.

"Amerrrica!" Someone shouted my name again.

"Dad?" I whined, swaying under the weight of my headache.

"Amerrrica!"

My shoulders were grabbed and I was spun around. My ears still rang and my vision was blurred with tears, but I came to reality. Russia was in front of me, looking annoyed but the expression disappeared as soon as he saw my tears.

"Hey, hey, it's okay." He pulled me into a tight hug and I stayed as limp as I had been. His voice was watery, barely heard over the

ringing of my ears. He rubbed my back, picked me up and set me down on the bed again. Once he saw the distant look in his eyes, he stopped talking. I hadn't realized he had continued to talk until the sound of his voice disappeared as he shut his mouth. I saw him wave his hand in front of me, I saw it happen but it didn't register in my head.

Gunshots echoed again, but this time a different deep voice yelled at him to duck. I winced and dove forward, hitting Russia in the stomach. His surprised cry of pain somehow brought me fully back to reality and I buried my head in his lap, hugging his waist and curling up towards him. I hate flashbacks. I hated them so much.

I heard Russia sigh, and he rubbed my back again.

"It's okay, there was no one there."

"hmm?" I picked my head up and looked up at him. He looked almost shocked for a second, his face turning red and he cleared his throat quickly.

"zerrre wasn't anyone zerrre."

"I thought I heard someone, they-they were chasing me and the door opened, just like-"

"Vait, what doorrr?" Russia lifted me up a little bit, making direct eye contact as if he could scan my memories.

"The one downstairs, by the back door. Down that hallway?"

His eyes widened and he quickly got off the bed, grabbing the gun he had left beside him. In a rush, he tossed the gun I had left towards me, told me to hide and practically ran out of the room. The urgency and fear I heard in his voice made me panic and I hastily grabbed the Glock and looked around the room. Where could I hide, where could I hide? I jumped off the bed, looking under it and saw it had too many things under it for me to hide.

I heard a loud bang and I jumped, almost dropping the gun. The door to the bedroom was still shut, so it hadn't been that. My heart was pounding once more, my headache starting to come back. i felt

my vision darken and I shook my head to steady myself. There was no way I was going to pass out, no. I needed to hide, Russia said to hide.

I looked to the closet and practically ran to it, shutting the door quickly and wincing as I heard it slam. Dumb move, America, fucking stupid ass move.

There wasn't much room, so I had to squat down, holding my hand against the wall to steady myself in order to hold the gun pointed at the door. The ringing in my ears from the first shot was there, faint, but loud enough for me to not be able to hear the quiet noises I needed to hear. I held my breath, trying to steady it and silence what could be my heavy panting. My arms shook, the gun quivering in my hands and I tried whatever I could to stop myself. Was Russia okay? What was happening down there? Why did he need to run down there? What was that bang? Was there really someone downstairs? How did that door open? Did I almost just die? Could that have been an intruder? What country would do that?

I hope to god this isn't some planned attack.

Footsteps close to me stopped my panic thinking. I froze, straining to hear past the ringing in my ears. Was someone out there? Was it just in my head? What if it is? What if this was another hallucination? Am I hallucinating? Am I going through another episode right now? What if when I fell asleep, I just woke up into it? How can I be sure? How can I not be sure? What if I hurt someone? What if I hurt Russia again?

The door opened and I pulled the trigger.

The figure grunted and stumbled back into the light.

"Amerrrica!"

I shot Russia.

My eyes widen at the realization. Oh fuck, I shot a Russian.

Russia stood there, leaning forward slightly with his arms over his

shoulder. He glared down at me, his dangling arm dropping his gun on the floor. His English left him and he shouted at me, "Что за черт! (What the hell!)"

"Oh god," I set the gun down on the floor, holding both my hands up. "Russia, I am so sorry."

"Тупая америка. Центр массы! (Stupid American. Center mass!)"

"What?"

"Centerrr mass!"

"Your bleeding."

"Don't you know to aim forrr the chest! Centerrr mass!"

"Russia you are fucking bleeding!"

"Не дерьмо, меня просто застрелила тупая страна, которая не умеет целиться! (No shit, I just got shot by a dumbass country who doesn't know how to aim!)" Russia stomped his foot, putting extra emphasis on what he said. My mind was racing too fast to make sense of what he had said, so I jumped up and ran over to him.

"Oh god, Russia, you need to sit down," I held my hand on his back and urged him to go to the bed. He growled at me and muttered things in Russian, and I was only able to pick out a few savory insults. I set him down on the bed and gently moved his hand out of the way. He was wearing a tank top so that made me looking at his shoulder easier. When I saw the damage I gave out a sigh of relief.

"Oh thank fucking God, I just grazed ya'."

"Fucking couldn't even shoot me rrright."

"Would you shut the fuck up, you are still bleeding. First aid still in the bathroom?"

A silent, very much angry, nod was my answer. I ran to the bathroom and went over what i remember. This was just a grazing, not much of a proper gunshot. Everything I need should be in the

first aid kit, I should be fine. Clean it, sew it, and band aid.

Russia was waiting for me, sitting with his arms and legs crossed on the bed. He glared at me again, not seeming bothered by the trickle of blood that had begun to seep into his shirt.

"You arrre fucking dumb."

"I'm sorry."

I stiffly walked over to him and began to clear the wound all the while apologizing profusely. Russia would go in and out of English with his insults, not bothering to decide which one he wanted to stay in. He would only wince slightly as I cleaned the wound and the blood, and as I stitched the skin shut. By the time I put a bandage on it, he had stopped insulting me and was only sitting in an angered silence.

"Feel a bit better?"

"Please, it vas just graze. I vould have been fine."

"I'm sorry."

"Neverrr giving you a gun everrr again. Fucking dumbass Amerrrican not knowing what you'rrre doing."

"Alright, that's racist. I said I was sorry."

Russia glared at me again. "I accept yourrr apology. Don't do it again."

I rolled my eyes and said, "obviously. I didn't mean to fucking shoot you man, I thought you were whoever broke in."

He hummed and nodded. "I didn't see anyone down there. My father's study was open like you said. It was empty."

"Is that what that room was?"

"Da."

"Oh," I paused and looked out the doorway. There was a large bullet hole in the wall, one that I knew could have fucked someone up if there had been anyone there. Desert Eagle I think he had. Not a bad gun. "I thought someone was following me, I'm sorry."

"It's fine. Yourrr head is messing with you," Russia stood up and closed the door, locking it. He put the chair against the handle again but didn't put the vase on the edge this time.

"Shouldn't you sleep?" I looked up at him but he shook his head.

"Nyet. In case someone is herrre."

"But I thought you said it was my head."

"Betterrr safe than sorrrry." Russia sat down on the opposite side of the bed and fell onto his back. I laughed and looked down at him, seeing him look absolutely exhausted. He had like a 30-minute nap at most, he can't live on that.

"Dude, sleep. I won't leave again." I jumped up suddenly remembering I have the stove on. "Fuck, the stove, I was making-"

"I know. It's off, I set it aside." He grabbed my arm and pulled me back down. I landed on my back, not really caring to stop him. I intertwined my fingers and rested them on my stomach. The ringing in my ears was gone, but I still felt like the sounds around me were muted. Something dull about them.

"Hey, Russia?"

"What?"

"When are we going to leave your room?"

"Until I say so."

"Well, then can we do something?" I turned on my side to look at him.
He lifted his head and raised an eyebrow. "Like what?"

I shrugged and looked around the room, looking for something

interesting. I looked back down at him and raised an eyebrow, smiling. Before he could be let onto what i just thought of, I forced a bored expression and looked back at him. He wore a similar deadpan expression but looked at me questioningly.

"I have an idea." I got onto my hands and knees and crawled the few inches we had between us then laid on top of him. I felt him tense up under me and saw him grab the blankets with his fists, curling them around them. With a smug smile, I rested my chin on my hands and looked down at him, examining his flustered surprised expression. It was really a sight to behold. "Why don't we play a little game."

"Uh, wh-what в какую игру ты пытаешься играть? (what game are you trying to play?)"

His slip into Russian made me smirk and I leaned close to his face, whispering, "I think you know."

As I got closer to his face, he jumped up and pushed me off, and I heard him practically scream, "NYET!" I bursted out laughing, holding my stomach. I turned onto my side, looking over at him to see if he was still freaking out. He was and was actually standing up with his back pressed against the wall.

"Aww, is the Ruski nervous?~"

"держись подальше от меня (Stay away from me.)" He held out his finger as I got up and started slowly walking to him. I narrowed my eyes and smiled, like a cat looking at its prey and ran at him. He ran to the other side of the room, trapping himself between the wall and his bed. Knowing he did that, he spun around to face me and I slowly started walking towards him. I was on the verge of laughing again, seeing him look as flustered and panicked as he did was amazing.

"Amerrrica, I swearrr to God." He held his hand up as if that was going to stop me. If he got serious, I would but seeing him in such a panic when he was usually so cold and collected was exhilarating.

"You won't let me leave, and all I wanna do is have some fun.~" I

stood in front of him and grabbed his tank top straps, pulling him down closer to me. He was still blushing but didn't pull back against me, so I figured why not try to see if I can test his so-called 'straightness'. I pulled him down a little bit more so I could get closer to his neck-the side without hickies-and I gently nuzzled the skin to test his reaction. He just shivered but didn't push me away yet. So I licked the crook of his neck, nibbling the skin a little. Russia set his hands on my shoulders but didn't do anything beyond that so I worked on giving him a hickey, kind of testing the waters more.

I felt his arms shake and he leaned into me more, so I sucked on his skin a little more roughly, biting down harder. His grip on my shoulders tightened and suddenly I heard him lowly moan, "Amerrrica.~"

We both froze, him slapping his hand over his mouth. I stopped what I was doing to look up at him, with a wide-eyed expression mixed with a surprise smile.

"What was that, Russia?"

With his free hand, he pushed me away and I stifled a laugh. He was still holding his hand over his mouth and looked more shocked than me. I decided to tease him a little and asked, "Russia, I didn't quite hear you, you want to repeat that?"

"Shut up. Why-why didn't you stop?!" He panicked, running his hand over his neck and hiding a defiant hickey.

"Why didn't you make me stop?" I countered his accusation and crossed my arms.  He didn't look to have an answer, so I added, "I was only going to go as far as you would let me."

"Vell, I. Just, shut up. You can vatch the doorrr since you vanted to. I'm going to sleep." He pushed past me and climbed onto the bed, quickly burying himself under the covers. I chuckled and leaned against his desk looking at him. He shuffled around a lot, turning on his side then onto the other all while keeping his face under the blankets.

I'm getting to him, I knew it. Him moaning my name did sound so fucking hot, though. I rubbed my neck, rubbing the fabric of the sweater instead of my actual skin. My neck felt a little weird but I figured it was because I slept on it wrong. It was weird, I didn't even remember falling asleep. But that's usually how that goes.

What I didn't understand was how I woke up in a different pair of jeans.

Russia just waved my questions off and insisted I had been wearing them the entire time. I told him no, but really didn't have any explanation for it so I let the question die.

I looked to Russia again and noticed he had stopped moving. He wasn't asleep yet, I could tell, so I figured I'd assume he was thinking. Yeah. He'll figure it out. There is no way in hell that guy is straight. I can feel it.

Hopefully, that won't be the only thing I'll be feeling, either.

**((Hello!!!! Yes, it is I, the author who has given up on a schedule and now just has a targeted area of time when I should publish the next chapter. So kind of like a schedule, but very loose. Takes the stress off. But I have an idea. A certain fourth wall breaking character, we all know who I'm talking about here, is willing to answer any questions you all can have. Like I know there is some confusion about how countries age, how their school works or like their entire environment, so I figured she could explain all of that and answer whatever questions you all could have. . . within reason.**

**So ask away here if ya want. If ya don't, then that's fine too!**

**Have a great day ya'll!))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Japan Explains

**Narrator's POV**

"HELLO!" Japan shouted loudly in her room, knowing she was home alone. She had purposely chased away her brother for this chapter, who actually happily left to spend some time with his friend China. And knowing siblings, any excuse to get away from each other is more than enough.

"Yes, this is when I get to talk to you all. Well," Japan paused rethinking her wording in the sentence. "I reply back to comments, questions, it's not like a direct back and forth."

To get herself back on track she clapped her hands and started with the obvious topic of question; age and school.

"So school is a little different, I'm sure you've noticed. You don't really stop after a certain amount of years, you keep going depending on how well you are in the subject and how well you can handle the topic on your own and it's not really an everyday thing. Its sort of like collage, with occasional classes weekly or maybe every other day. We have classes based on agriculture, what form of government the country follows, the environment, how to preserve it, and technology. You can't really force a country to attend them, but it is noticeable when a country lacks in the class. There's even countries that teach classes, but UN is the one who tries to make everything run smoothly. You can kind of see him as like a principal or mayor since his work and duties extend beyond the school."

She tapped her chin trying to think of other differences or trying to remember if she missed anything.

"Age, well, I guess that's another thing I believe Russia kind of covered slightly in a thought thing when he and America were kidnapped by those tribes," Japan looked up to the ceiling, imagining that's where the voice of the narrator would come from like one does while looking up to God. "Am I allowed to talk about

that?”

Expecting some sort of voice she waited there for a second, mainly because the narrator did not want to respond. They were still upset that Japan can break free from the story when she wants.

“Oh hush, you love me. I bet you never got to talk to anybody before I came along.”

The narrator would have been fine with this. Never the less, Japan should know what to and what not to talk about according to the plot of the story and what must not be disclosed yet to not take away excitement and mystery of future chapters.

“Ah,” Japan snapped her fingers. “Got it. Avoid that for suspense,” she wiggled around her fingers for a dramatic effect.

“So,” she started to pace around her room to help her concentrate, “age is different for each country. Some could have been around for centuries and appear to be younger, like America he’s been around for how long now? But he appears to be a young adult or a teenager. And Russia, he hasn’t been around as long as him, but he appears older than him. It depends on the situation the country is in, and what is best for survival, almost.

“Like me and my brother, after our mom died we had to grow up fast in order to survive. That’s usually how it happens, a countries parent, or parents die, and they have no choice but to grow up. I’ve dealt with what happened, and I'm trying to look on the brighter side of things,” Japan smiled happily. “I’m doing well, both of us are actually. Sunrise, he um. He hasn’t moved on completely, he actually holds a grudge against America. He doesn’t hate him, we both enjoy his culture, but he can't move on.”

To lighten the mood a little she perked up and said, “well hey, someone did ask how my family is like. So, there! A little insight, but just coming from me Sunrise is really annoying and totally tries to stop my shipping plans like a jerk. Little does he know, I know he likes China and I'm trying to help them get together so he can shut up.”

She laughed to herself, reflecting back on memories. “All that’s recent, and I owe it to my brother so sorry anyone who liked me trying to get China together with North Korea. SK helped me for a little bit, but when his brother found out they had a fight and I promised him I wouldn’t try it again.”

Japan stood in place for a second, getting sidetracked by her memories and thoughts on possible ship replacements. Then she remembered she promised SK she wouldn’t do anything like that with North so she blinked a few times and stopped herself from coming up with any sort of plan.

“What was I talking about?”

As if she needed some sort of cosmic help, she remembered she had a printed copy of the comments in her notebook.

“Um, no I did not, but I’m happy I do now.” Japan walked over to her desk and pulled out her notebook. For most countries, she knew that a simple new memory would be inserted for how they got the new thing, but since she was now outside the normal walls of the story it wouldn’t affect her. It was strange seeing how much could actually change over the course of the story that no one ever noticed.

“Okay, now this will make things easier,” she pulled out the paper, printed on front and back on the paper were comments and questions.

“Was I the person who broke into Russia’s house?” She read the first comment and had to remember what the question was. “Sorry, this chapter was written after two other ones were, which with the time skips means that what happened was a few months ago. Am I from the future then technically?

"But, no I was not the one. That would be such a good idea though, imagine all the rusame shots I could get.”

The narrator would like to remind Japan that this was supposed to be a short chapter for exposition reasons only.

“Yeah yeah yeah,” Japan mocked the narrator, showing no regard or respect for them. “Oh don’t be such a baby, you’ll be fine.”

She pauses to read another comment.

“Oh, Wales! Wales is the dragon country, yes? The one with the dragon wings that few know about and I’m not supposed to be one of those few?”

The narrator would sigh audibly right now if it could.

“Im guessing that’s a yes,” Japan smiled. “But I’m sure the author could whip something up with Wales in it, like a small cameo. Oh, a little interesting thing. UK actually has little dragon ears he hides under his hat and hair, I think it is because Wales doesn’t have direct representation on his flag, the author saw it somewhere and thought it was cute, so its cannon. And I know about it now, too!”

The next question yet to be addressed was one about Russia and America.

“Oh gay one, okay, let's see,” She quickly scanned the comments, reading over them all to help determine her answers. “I, the Deadpool of this universe, will do everything in my power to make sure that America and Russia get together. I will play my part in that happily, and whether or not they fuck I have been told to stay out of due to my lack of knowledge on ‘boundaries’.”

Her air quotes around the word boundaries should make every country a little nervous.

“I do know that America can get flustered easily if he isn’t allowed mental preparation, which I totally relate to. And when he gets drunk, he can act just like Russia, in topic of recklessness so the idea of them both being drunk is scary and going to cause everyone a lot of property damage.”

Japan remembered when America had been over at her house and they had drunk a little bit, America getting completely plastered and convincing her it was completely safe for the two to go driving around. They obviously crashed, but it wasn’t a bad reck they didn’t

even go far from her house, crashing into the garden in front of the house. Sunrise was furious with both of them.

“But, despite what most of you think America did top in his past relationships, but I’m sure Russia would fix that. Although, with how its been going so far, I’m not sure who’s going to be top in the relationship. So for the person who betted 20 bucks, am I going to take their money, then give it back, then take it again, or?”

She waited there in silence, still expecting an auditory response when it was near possible to receive one.

“Well if you aren’t auditory then explain why I can understand you. Or why you talked to me before?"

Silence once more.

“It's hard being narrated by a narrator who is increasingly getting annoyed with you. I mean, its funny for me,” Japan laughed, “but I bet annoying for whosever reading.”

Moving on, she continued with the questions. “Where do we live? Oh, we live sort of on an island, its actually interesting, before I broke the fourth wall I didn’t even know this. Our island is almost like if you take all the physical landmasses of the earth, including their own weather and climate, and put them all together into a single landmass. So it's all connected, but towards the north and south of the island it's always snowing, there's large bodies of water that I guess take the place of the oceans. Me and Sunrise actually live on a small island. There's islands inside the island!

"However, I'm not sure where it is on the earth itself, cause yes in our world humans do exist but we’ve never seen one in person. They don’t even know we exist, and any trade relations that may exist are run through UN.”

Japan thought to herself a little more. “Hey, I wonder If there is a way we can reach out to them. Or like visit. That would be so cool, having actual people here. Most of our shops and restaurants they are either run by countries or but automatic machines.”

UN runs external affairs, with help from other formations, so much to Japan's disappointment, the possibilities of any country leaving or humans finding themselves on the island is highly unlikely. There is even a shield around the island that hides it from the rest of the world, also keeping foreigners out.

"Dang. I wonder if I pester UN about it he'll let me."

Japan never did give up when she had an idea in her head.

"No I do not," she smiled at her ceiling. "Another interesting topic that I find fun is how a country can change their flag. I find it fun because it's so normal for me, but humans don't do it. Man, I want to meet a human one day.

"Anyways, the flags. It can usually happen during a time of great change like extreme stress, oppression, revolutions, and independence, or even small little changes can happen when a country accumulates territory. The country can actually change their own flag if they want to, it's about personal choice and most do it to escape an identity they had forced upon. It's a long process and can take a while to fully happen, so its not really something we do for fun. Depending on what the change is, it can be painful."

To make sure she covered everything, she did a quick scan through the comments, mumbling a few words under her breath.

"Oh, my favorite ships!"

She set the paper down and went to a wall in her room, grabbing a small string that brought down a map. "I have many plans for a lot of countries, they are always changing. My favorite ones, besides Rusame of course, wait should I go for cannon or noncannon? Because for cannon, Greenland and Antarctica are the doses of fluff I love in this world, but for not cannon, that's a hard one."

She looked at the map and the mess of green, blue, and pink string that ran everywhere. "I think, maybe it would have to be Sweden and— no wait, defiantly Canada and Mexico. Although Kazakhstan and Canada would be so cute. Maybe Portugal and.."

**Seeing how we lost her**

“Whoa, wow the whole voice just changed, how did you do that?”

**Japan not now, this is the end card.**

“Oh, now you can talk audibly. How does no one else hear this?”

**Its called end card for a reason. Anyways, this concludes the existence of a fourth wall for Japan, she has effectively smashed it with a hammer. Even so, I am back baby so expect me to keep my before horrible scheduling of posting. I have a few plans and am actually in the process of writing the next chapter, so that should be out soon. Im sure after this if there are any more questions I can answer them, I don’t want to give Japan too much power.**

**She might find out about 🅱oland.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Suprise

**Narrator's POV**

"Shut up, it can smell fear."

"Yah knaow ih' cahn't. Maexicao, haelp me grahb ih'."

"Fuck that noise, I'd rather wrestle with a chupacabra."

"It's foine. Just daon't leh ih' boigh' ya."

"Son, " Britain eyed Australia, the rest of his body unmoving. His hands clutched his cane tightly, holding it close to his chest. "You better capture it before it breaks anything."

"Daon't wohry pawp, I cahn hahndle thies." Australia slowly crept towards the dull blue bird. "It's nawt a cahssaowaray."

It was another relatively normal day for their family, this time Mexico replacing America in the family panic spot. Australia had brought home another bird that he knew wasn't too dangerous (though he had said that with a lot of considerably dangerous animals before). South Africa had came to him for help when he was brought the injured bird. He figured he could help it until it was healthy enough to be released. Unfortunately, for everyone else besides the Aussie who rather enjoyed the chase, it got loose.

"Please be careful," Canada warned, flinching as if he was the one approaching the large bird. No one knew what it would do, it was an injured and possibly scared bird. If it weren't for it's injured wing, it could have made an aerial attack.

That's what they all thought at least.
Australia knew better. It was a Shoebill, not necessarily the most dangerous bird he's encountered, but definitely not the most appealing. He didn't care, but the others saw it and immediately thought that it was dangerous. But with previous events mirroring

this one, no one can blame them.

Any scared animal could be dangerous, actually. This one seemed to be okay, if not a little spooked. It zipped around the house, scaring everybody, probably looking for a safe spot to hide.

"It's okai guhl, " Aussie slowly stepped towards it, his hands stretched outward. He spoke quietly, calmly, and tried to use his special charm with animals that always seemed to calm them down. "I'm nawt gawnna huht ya."

The shoebill clattered its beak, the repetitive sound mimicking machine gunfire. It didn't do anything but stand in place and watch Australia carefully. The goal was to pick her up and carry her back to his own clinic, which was a room that Britain had given him temporarily for the purpose of taking care of animals. If nothing got broken along the way, that would be an added bonus.

"I'M HOME!"

The bird jumped, including everyone else, and it quickly scurried away, running out of the living room. The bird hit the decorative stand and Australia noticed the expensive vase that was about to fall and caught it before it could.

"Dahmn it, Ame, " Aussie groaned and ran after the bird.

Before anyone else could do anything, they heard a surprised America exclaim, "the fuck is that? Oh GOD!"

The bird jumped onto America, its claws digging into Ame's jacket and he fell down in fright. It stood on him and clicked his beak before screaming in his face. America screamed in return.

"Gotcha!" Australia grabbed the bird and pried it off of America, trying to be careful of its wing.

"That's the third time this month I was attacked by one of your pets, you kangaroo fucker." America complained, the insult one of many he has used for Australia.

"Oh shuh' up yah shawtgun roidah," Aussie laughed and helped

America onto his feet, reusing one of his own brotherly insults. “You knaow thies is moy whay of sayin' I love ya.”

“Yeah and this is mine,” America held up his middle finger. He laughed it off, the two walking back to the living room with America staying far away from the bird who was still chattering. He seemed okay in Australia’s arms for now, and he’d like to keep it that way.

“Hello dear!” France smiled at America as he walked into the room and he smiled back giving his own greeting.

“You well, son?” Britain nudged his cane towards the bird and his torn jacket. America looked down, upset about the tears but untimely wasn’t too worked up. He could always buy another one.

“Yeah, Aussie got him,” America nudged towards Australia.

“Her.” He corrected.

America still went to hide with the rest of his family. He spotted Mexico practically hiding in Canada’s robe and was reminded of the song he had sung for him. He knew Canada actually was trying to learn Spanish after that, hoping to figure out for himself what the song meant. Those two would have been cute together, but he was dating Ukraine. So Mex is just going to have to find someone else to try and go after, unfortunately.

“Sup taco,” he greeted.

“Hola burger?” Mexico tilted his head at the nickname, confused but then shook it off. America always hit everyone with a random nickname at different points in time, it was just him being weird.

Australia took the bird into his vet room, while everyone put the house back together.

“I don’t understand why he refuses to take the animals to his own place.”

"Dad, the fires."

"Of course, how could I forget. Even so, before then he was bringing his animals here."

“Hon, you waire ze un who wentéd ze kids to stai wiv us.”

“Yeah pop, being controlling isn’t always the best now is it?”

Britain shot America a dirty look but internally agreed with him. When France and Britain first built their house they realized they had a lot of spare room, and France said that she would feel lonely. So they offered rooms for their children, to which Australia, New Zealand and Canada agreed to pretty easily. Britain was happy to look after his children, his sense of keeping tabs on his past colonies never leaving him. America didn’t join for a long time but soon followed suit after Canada asked him.

And we all know that if America would listen to anyone, it would be Canada. The two are closer to each other than they are with the rest of their family and often tell each other everything. Even if it has to be through mail when the other is stuck in a blizzard.

“Did you get my letter?” America asked Canada after the two were able to get away from the rest of the family. They went upstairs, Mexico being asked to get a few drinks for the three as an excuse to keep him away.

Canada nodded and fiddled with his fingers. “I don’t know what's going on, I thought I was doing good I thought I was making up for everything.”

“Canada, its okay, none of us knows why this is happening,” America held his brother in a comforting hug, trying to keep him from having a panic attack. “I don’t even know why that figure mentioned you, or if there is really any connection here.”

Canada didn’t say anything about what he thought was happening (as he was told not to by Britain) and just gently shook in America’s arms, trying not to cry and instead trying to feel somewhat protected. He was still fearful. He’s seen what happened to America, how his episodes go, how painful they were to him. It was scary seeing him have those, Canada couldn’t imagine going through one

himself. He didn't get any pain, no warning. He woke up and saw his eye in the bathroom mirror.

"Can I see?"

Canada moved away a little bit and lowered his head. With a silent nod he took off his eyepatch and held it tightly in his hand. America cupped his face, tilting his head up to look at what he had been told to hide.

"Oh Canada," America gasped, losing his breath. He knew what to expect, he knew that his eye had turned black like his. He had told him what happened in that letter, saying that he hasn't had any episodes yet, that the only thing so far was his eye. He feels like it's a warning, but a warning to what he wasn't entirely too sure of.

"America, I'm. I'm scared. What if someone finds out? Cause then people will suspect you, too. You are always wearing your sunglasses, and I know you don't want anyone else to find out. Especially after Germany and now Russia, what if word gets out?"

"Hey, Canada?" America stopped his rambling. Canada held his tongue and focused back to reality and not the long lists of 'what ifs'. "It's going to be okay. You told me the same things whenever I had worries, you have to tell yourself the same thing."

He took a deep breath and nodded. "You're right, everything is okay."

"What's going to be okay? Is there something wrong?"

The two turned to see Mexico standing in the doorway. He held the three drinks in his hands, struggling to hold the odd number of glasses but managed it pretty well.

Instinctively he looked to Canada first and as soon as he did the glasses fell from his hands. They shattered on the ground, the liquids inside spilling out and mixing together, spreading the glass farther.

"Your, your eye," Mexico gasped, his hand hovering over his mouth and his other hand weakly shaking and pointing towards his taller

friend.

Canada slapped his hand over his eye, panic quickly engulfing him. “No, no, no, please don’t freak out!”

“What happened, what,” Mexico gasped and ran his hand through his hair, trying to make sense of what he just saw. “Was that some weird contact thing?”

“Yes!” America jumped at the excuse. “That’s exactly what it was.”

“No, America,” Canada scolded him for the fib. “It’s not.”

He turned back to Mexico and let his hand slowly drop revealing his eye. He heard his smaller friend gasp slightly again upon seeing his eye again. It was weird, unnatural, and made Mexico nervous to look at. There was something about it that just seemed empty like he wasn’t looking at a dark page, it was like he was looking into an abyss. An eternal nothing.

“I woke up one day and it was like this,” Canada admitted.

“You don’t know what happened?” Mexico asked, shifting on his feet nervously. He kept looking down and fiddling with his fingers.

America shook his head no when Canada looked up at him.

“No, I don’t.”

Mexico brought himself to look back up at Canada, to see his eye again. He blinked and looked past it. Everything about him was the same, his face, his nervous expression, his body, his style of clothing. Nothing really changed about him, he was upfront and honest. Nervous, and scared. He was still Canada. Nothing about him had changed, all except his physical appearance.

“Well, it's not like your different, right?” Mexico asked, trying for a smile. Canada rubbed his eye but then nodded.

“No, I feel the same. I just. I just look different.”

“Well, I shared with you something I was scared of and you still

wanted to be my friend. You can expect the same from me, trust me."

Canada smiled and little pinpoint drops of tears formed in his eyes. He grabbed up Mexico and held him in a tight hug, squeezing him tight and unintentionally hurting his wings. They were tucked under his shirt and fastened to be flatted on his back and extending around his sides and stomach. It wasn't perfectly flat, but flat enough not to cause any suspicion.

America looked at the two and rubbed his arm. He wished this was how it worked out for him and Russia, but he knew something like that would have also depended on himself. He ran out into a blizzard like a lunatic. Canada calmly told the truth. As calmly as he could, that is.

Mexico had no thought to America, going against both of their anxieties and worries. After a moment of reassurance, Mexico didn't mind Canada's eye. It made him look unique and different. And the way he tried to hide it with his hair, it was cute. Canada was just so undeniably cute to him.

But unfortunately he wasn't the only one who thought the same thing about Canada.

They had settled down in Canada's room, America sitting in his computer chair and Canada and Mexico sprawled on the bed. It worked since America got kind of restless and would spin in the chair.

"So yeah, after he passed out I stayed up all day then took a nap and woke up to see Finland and Estonia. They gave me a ride here and then I come home to get attacked by a monster of a bird."

"It was funny hearing you scream like a baby." Mexico poked fun, America returning with a middle finger shoved in his direction.

"That's what happened to me," America didn't mention a few things for obvious reasons; him running into a blizzard, what happened with Russia, nor the steamy moments between them. "What happened while I was gone. I'm sure everything went to shit."

“It was pretty normal, although missing your classes about climate and environmental preservation as much as you have been isn’t going to be good.”

“Eh, it’ll be fine.”

Canada gave his brother a disconcerted look and shook his head.

“Nah. Nothing changed much, so I guess you're not as important as you think you are.” Mexico teased, getting another middle finger from America.

Canada sprung up from his spot on the bed and sat up suddenly. “America, you didn’t hear about what happened to Poland, did you?!”

America stopped mid-spin and looked at him confused. “Uh no? Is the dude okay?”

Mexico and Canada shared an unreadable look. “You should see him.”

After that, he grabbed a different coat plus a few extra clothes for warmth and hurried his way to Poland’s house. As he jogged, he felt his phone vibrate and the song Ra Ra Rasputin started to play. It was Russia calling him.

“Something happened to Poland.”

“I heard, I’m on my way to his house right now. Do you know what happened?”

“Nyet.”

“How close are you to his place?”

“Passing Lithuania’s.”

“I think I know where that is. I’ll see you when I get there.”

America hung up and continued on his run there. Russia wasn’t in a rush, he had just spoken to Poland earlier that day who asked when

was the soonest he could come over. So he knew he was alive, and his voice didn't seem to hold a bad tone. He seemed very rushed, though, and said its best to talk in person. And besides, he had to keep his calm stone-cold demeanor, and running down the street in a panic wouldn't do that.

He spotted America further down the road once he came upon Poland's house. He waited for him to catch up before he knocked on Poland's door.

"I zought I told you not to kome out into kold." Russia frowned at the fact that America ran here when he should have been possibly dropped off by car or something that would limit his exposure to the cold.

"Oh hush, I'm fine. Im wearing extra stuff."

"Zat's good, but what vould have been better vould have been getting rrride."

Before America could come with a retorting response, Czech Republic answered the door. He appeared to be extremely tired, and unbeknownst to them he actually wasn't, it was just his resting face. But to actually make him unpleasant, he was cheerfully greeted by America.

"Hey, wassup Poland with an eyepatch."

"This is why I hate you."

"Ahh, you love me."

Russia nudged America aside, asking if Poland was home. As soon as those words left his mouth however, the country in question came slowly walking up behind Czech. He looked okay, healthy at least maintaining his normal look. The only difference, the one the two at the door noticed right away was what lingered behind Poland.

A pair of white wings.

"Holy shit."

“What the fuck happened.”

“That’s the same thing I asked when I came home,” Czech had to drag the two inside the house since they stood frozen in the doorway. He closed the door and let Poland do the rest of the talking, as he usually did with other countries he didn’t particularly care about or know.

“I don’t know, I just woke up a few days ago and they were here,” he stretched out one of his wings and brushed the feathers. He smiled proudly at them, remembering fond memories of how he used to soar so high into the clouds. But with that brought cold air and less oxygen, so of course, he couldn’t do it for long.

Snapped out of his initial trance, America shook his head. “Dude, you got your wings!”

“I know!”

The two jumped excitedly, squealing like little kids who just won a trip to their favorite theme park. A part of Russia would have joined the exciting outburst—if he could have broken his wide-eyed stare —but he could control himself better than that.

Poland brought the two to the living room after he and America calmed down so they could talk more while Czech left to go get a drink with Slovakia. Germany was still there, who off settled Czech slightly, but he was mostly in Poland’s room borrowing his computer for his work so he didn’t complain too much. He had heard Poland and America but decided to say hi and talk to him after he finished a few more papers.

“When did zey grrrow back?” Russia asked, not being able to take his eyes off the wings. He hadn’t seen him with those in years, and those memories are faint and barely there. It was almost unbelievable, incredible really.

“Three days ago, maybe three and a half. Everything has been a blur lately with Germany staying here, my wings, and me trying to learn how to fly again.” Poland sighed and rubbed a few feathers between his fingers.  “It all happened so fast.”

“Gerrrmany is staying herrre?” Russia asked, glancing around for evidence of the other country.

“He’s in my room working on my computer right now.” Poland motioned in the direction of his room with a slight wave of his hand before looking up at America. “He tried to get ahold of you a few times too. Where you really stuck at Russia’s?”

“Unforrrtunately,” Russia mumbled.

“Oh hush, I didn’t hurt you.” America rolled his eyes but after he really thought about it he bit his tongue. Russia looked at him with a raised eyebrow and pointed to his shoulder.

“Okay, so I may have shot you.”

“YOU WHAT?!” Poland exclaimed, eyes growing wide.

“It was on accident!” America tried to defend himself. “He startled me and I shot his shoulder."

"Barrrely."

"Would you like me to try again?"

Russia paused for a moment, considering it.

"If you do, make surrre to kill me."

"What, no, Russia. Im not gonna kill you."

"Vell if you dont shoot to kill, you'll have verrry pissed of Rrrussian chasing after you."

"How about I dont shoot you?"

"Zat'll work."

Poland looked at the two in shock and concern, America trying to calm the worry by saying, "It was just a graze, he’ll be okay.”

“Either vay,” Russia spoke over the two before the topic could become a big deal, “I’m not dead. But why is Germany herrre?”

“Yeah, isn’t a little early for you two to be living together?”

“It was,” Poland glanced down, “unexpected. He just showed up here and wont tell me much of what happened, just that he needed to stay here for a while.”

“Is he okay?” America was about to get up and go see Germany himself but Russia set his hand on his arm to stop him from doing anything.

“Yeah, he’s better now. We’ve been mostly trying to figure out what exactly happened,” he fluffed up his wings for emphasis. "They just grew back overnight."

"Did anything happen the day beforrre?" Russia intertwined his fingers and placed them in his lap, trying to think of ways this could have happened. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, they both could have an answer that he may not know.

"Well, nothing really. Germany and I talked for a bit, watched a few movies. I showed him what had happened to my wings, before they grew back that is." Poland paused and he shook his head quickly, blinking a few times. "He did also tell me about his sharp teeth, so I guess we confided in each other more."

"He told you about those? Damn, he really likes you." America traced his tongue along the bottoms of his teeth as he thought about seeing Germany with those sharp teeth back when he first found him. The sight of the poor kid holding his little sister under their father's desk, it was heartbreaking.

"You know about zose?" Russia looked at America, genuinely surprised.

"Duh, the dude lived with me for a while, " America crossed his arms and leaned back into the couch more. "How do you know."

"His sister."

"Oh."

Silence filled the room and the air pressure dropped just as quickly.

"Hmm. You don't zink zose zings kould somehow have konnection, do you?" Russia turned back to Poland, trying to restart a conversation. "You tvo telling each other zose zings."

Poland shrugged, his wings bouncing slightly. "Your guess is as good as mine."

"Oooh, maybe it's the power of your love. Aww, wouldn't that be just sweet." America sighed a high pitch sigh and draped himself across Russia's lap. "The power of gay love. It is such an amazing ability."

Russia ignored America, again, and suggested that it could have been triggered by something, or someone could have done something. But no one could really explain it, not anyone Poland talked to.

"Perrrhaps UN?"

Poland shook his head. "The poor man is always stressed, I didn't want to put more on his plate. Plus he was busy when I checked."

"What does Germany think?" America asked, trying to get more comfortable on Russia's lap. Poland made a mental note that Russia didn't seem to mind and he adjusted himself for both of them to be more comfortable.

"He likes that they are soft, but he was worried about why they did grow back, too. Especially about the fact that they did so now."

Germany stood in the hallway, just out of sight, listening to the conversation. He rubbed his arm nervously, biting his lip gently. He was more aware of being careful with his teeth now they had grown a little more pointed. This was when he would sand them down before they became too noticeable, but Poland had persuaded him not to.

"Guys, I really do think something is wrong with him."

The line took him from his thoughts and he listened back to the conversation.

“Ever since he’s got here, he seems more,” Poland paused and tried to find the right word. “I don’t know, I guess more secretive and worried. And for an entire day he didn’t say anything to me, he just looked so. So scared.”

America sat up understanding that this was serious now. “Did he say anything about anything? Or was it just,” he made the motion of zipping his lips shut.

Poland nodded.

“He’s been having panic attacks more, and I’ve managed to make sure nothing bad happens, but I’m worried.”

Germany let out a quiet sigh, shuffling further back down the hallway. He had been trying to avoid the subject like the plague, not wanting to subject Poland to the same things he felt. For all he knew, what he saw and felt in that house lately, it could have been flashbacks. They could have been random moments related to PTSD. He didn’t know for certain, and a logical part of him knew that he had to act rationally, test his hypothesis instead of making assumptions of the worst.

Especially about what it could mean.

“I was hoping that he might open up to you, America.”

“Me?”

“He did live vith you after his father’s death, you took on a rrrole as prrrotectorrr, like an older brrrother,” Russia explained, understanding what Poland had meant. “It seems whatever is botherrring him, he’s skarrred to tell Poland.”

“I figured that’s why he tried to call you a bunch of times. I tried to get him to open up, but it just seems like he’s too scared to. And whenever it seems like I can get some answers, he has a panic attack. I didn’t want to keep doing that to him.”

America understood and nodded solemnly. “I’ll talk to him. Where is he?”

“My bedroom, it's just down the hall there, “ Poland pointed to the dimmed hallway entrance. “He might be working.”

“Got it,” America stood and walked towards the hallway, leaving Poland and Russia in the living room. When he saw Germany walking into the open doorway he paused. Had he been out in the hallway listening to them? Or did he just get up to do something?

“Hey, Ger-man, wassup.”

“Hello, Ame.” Germany sat back down at the small table and opened the laptop.

America frowned at the unanswered question and the cold shoulder. His tone was greeting, but how he presented himself didn’t match it.

“I heard you were trying to get ahold of me? The blizzard I was stuck in, it cut out the phone signal so I couldn’t get anything.”

“It’s okay,” Germany tried to focus on his paper in front of him. His fingers hovered over the keys, his thumbs gently rubbing the small lines on the ‘j’ and ‘f’ keys. “I only vanted to call, pecauze.”

Once he knew that Germany couldn’t bring himself to say something, America moved to stand next to him and rested his hand on his shoulder. “Hey, it's okay, you can take your time.”

Germany nodded, closing the laptop and turning slightly to him. “Zomezing. . . Habened. At mein houze.”

America sat down on the edge of the table and looked down at Germany, watching him play with his hands nervously. His knee bounced, shaking his body slightly. He wasn’t in his usual formal dress wear either, actually wearing what looked to be like Poland’s clothes. Seeing him dressed down was somewhat of a strange sight, ever since his dad taught him his version of etiquette he tried to maintain that with his own spin on it.

“I don’t know how to hexblain it, put I zought,” he took a moment to breathe and steady himself. “I zought I heard. . . Him.”

The blood turned to ice in America, his whole body freezing. No. He's dead, he reminded himself. You saw his body, he's dead.

"Do you think you had a flashback or something?" America spoke quieter, hoping, praying, that was the reason.

Germany shrugged. "I zink zo, put it chust came out of novere. Und hesbecially afder vat I zaw in zee mirror, I chust. Im scared. I-I-I don't vant to ko pack to zat houze."

"Wait, you saw something in a mirror?"
He saw Germany's eyes widen slightly and he quickly turned his head in shame.

"Zat day ven Scotland drobed me off at Ruzia's," Germany began to quietly explain. "I had run out of zee houze pecauze I zought I had zeen his refleczion in zee mirror."

"Im sure its nothing, it-it could just be something like hallucinations or something." America tried to reason away the fear that the two had now. He didn't want to imagine anything that involved his father, that monster. He'd dead, gone. Soviet buried him, burned his body, or something, he didn't really care. The fact is he's is dead.

"Im sure Poland wouldn't mind you staying here until you feel better."

"He zaid I could sday as long as I neeted too. Put, I don't want to ko pack to zat house. I chust cant."

"Im not going to make you." America tried to calm him down. Small drops of tears ran down his face and he hugged his chest tightly, pulling on the fabric that covered his arms. The clothes were slightly tight on him since Poland was smaller than Germany so he didn't have much fabric to hold. "Is there anything you need? Clothes? Stuff for your classes? I can get it."

Germany was about to protest him going into that house, but there was yet to be any real incident that proved there was something bad happening. He didn't want to risk it, but he did need a few essentials. America is a capable country when he really needs to be.

He can trust him on this one. Hopefully.

In the living room Russia had finished giving Poland the gist of what happened, the same spew he planned to give everyone else if they asked what happened. Obvious normal things, leaving out a few details about America and his near-death experience, the event with his episodes and eyes and the obvious gay moments that Russia refused to acknowledge outwardly at all.

The two talked for a little while longer, making small talk about what Poland was going to fly with his new wings. He couldn't hide them like other countries who had them could, everyone knew about his incredible recovery. He did kind of excitedly tell everyone he knew and tried to fly as soon as he could before Germany convinced him to wait until they could go somewhere warmer.

He hoped that nothing bad happened to them, or himself, again.

After awhile, Germany and America came back to the living room. The mood had lightened, America promising not to tell anyone about what happened, especially not Poland. He reluctantly agreed, and that helped calm him down. He didn't want to cause a panic because he couldn't tell the difference between reality and a hallucination. America understood the feeling.

As a few hours passed, the pair made it into the conjoined dining room and kitchen, talking and eating some food that Poland and Germany made together. Poland texted Japan a few things as they were seated, Germany getting the same texts but reading over Poland's shoulder.

"If you had the opportunity to fuck a space alien, would you?"

"Amerrrica, if you had the opporrrtunity to shut up vould you?"

Maybe it was best that they didn't hear the full conversation between Russia and America anyway.

"It was just a question. And no, why would I shut up? I love weirding you out."

Russia raised a brow and looked unamused at him. He once again saw his reflection in his mirrored sunglasses and tried to picture just seeing his eyes instead. As soon as he tried, a memory of his dream surfaced and he quickly looked away.

“Hey Poland, vould you vant some help trrrying to learrrn how to fly again?”

Poland and Germany looked up from his phone and Poland happily said, “actually, I could use the help.”

“I kan talk to my brrrotherrrrs forrr you. Im cerrrtain one of zem vould vant to help.”

“I would deeply appreciate it.”

“Wait, you had wings for the longest time before. Why can't you know how to fly now?”

“Oh,” Germany sat up more and pushed up his glasses, “zat’s zimble, really. Imagine zat zomeone had learned ein skill, put had neffer berformed zee skill in years, or decades. Zey vould cerdainly not know how to do zee skill hanymore, or at least rememper fery little of it.”

“Oh, but these are wings, not something like knowing how to skateboard.”

“Same zing. If one is in accident and kan no longer walk, zey have to go thrrrough zerrrapy to rrreach a level zat is similarrr to norrrmal. It's like loosing leg and trrrying to walk with a differrrent one,” Russia helped America understand it more, and after a moment he nodded.

“Okay, yeah that makes sense. I wonder what it’s like to fly.”

“It’s amazing. You feel weightless, almost freeing, and like nothing can chain you down,” Poland smiled and looked up at the ceiling, picturing a bright blue sky with small wisps of clouds and a brilliant sun. He couldn’t wait until he could reach those clouds again, run his hand through them and dive through, the whites and grays parting to show the landscape below them.

“It's not fun when you fall zough.” Russia pointed out, remembering when Kaz carried Russia home from something and had dropped him from a height that felt like death. It was around maybe two stories, and he was okay after a while, but he didn’t let Kaz do that to him ever again.

“No, it isn’t. But that’s all going to be a second thought when I'm in the air again.”

“Bleaze chust don’t bush yourzelf too far. I don’t vant vu crashing into any more trees.” Germany cautioned Poland, who nodded and knew the goal was not to get hurt. It wasn’t like he wanted to anyway.

A loud ringing cut through the conversation, the sound of the Harry Potter theme creating confusion for the three who looked to America. He pulled out his phone and knew who was calling already.

“I’ll be back, it's my dad,” America said as he walked out of the room to answer the call.

Russia studied his mannerism and noted that his tone was nonchalant, not necessarily bad but still dreading the conversation. Nothing suggested a fight was about to happen over the call so he relaxed a little bit.

“Sup pop.”

“You left without saying where you were going again.”

“I thought something happened to Poland, I had to make sure he was okay.”

He heard his father’s voice say something he couldn’t make out before taking a deep breath. “You can't keep doing this, America. You know the rules.”

“Right, the rules,” America mocked his father silently as he started talking again.

“America, I thought you would take what's going on more seriously.

There is obviously something going on with your eyes, and now with what's happening to Canada, both of you need to be more cautious.”

“Dad, I’ll be fine.”

“The same way Australia said he would be fine?”

“Hey, me and him aren’t the same-“

“Him and I.”

“*Me and him* aren’t the same country. Things have cooled down for him now, haven't they? Besides he has countries who are helping him."

Britain didn't need to hear America say the rest to know what he had meant. Australia would have countries who would help him, America wouldn't. The boy seems to forget he has a family, has friends.

"Your mother and I want you to come home. You've been gone for so long already, it's a miracle you haven't had an episode yet."

America bit his lip. "Yeah. Real lucky."

"Finish up your visit and don't forget to thank Poland for his hospitality."

"Got it. But, Dad, wait. If you want us to be careful why is Mexico at the house?"

"Canada insisted. The two are close allies, and he made a fair point of avoiding suspicion. We don't want to make it seem like you two are on lockdown. It'll raise attention."

He nodded along, knowing that it made sense.

"Does that mean Russia can come over sometime?"

"America, " Britain's tone warned.

"What? We are friends. You just are going to have to get used to that."

The line was silent and America held his hand on his hip. There was background noise for a few moments before Britain finally said, "come home. We'll talk about it."

The call ended but America held the screen to his face for a few moments longer. He knew they wouldn't talk more about it. They never do.

"Alrighty guys, I gotta get outta here, " America said as he walked back into the room.

"Yourrr dad?" Russia tilted his head up slightly, already knowing the answer. Father wanted him home. By America's tone and posture, it wasn't a particularly good conversation.

"Yeah, but it was fun, thanks for having me."

"It was no problem, please come by when you can." Poland waved his hand to say goodbye, Germany, and Russia both saying their goodbyes.

Russia watched America intently, trying to focus on his behavior a little more. He had moved stiff, hurried out of the room, and by the sounds of it moved even faster to leave. What had his father said to him? He hoped it wasn't anything bad, and he hoped America knew that if it ever was too bad he could always stay at his home.

As long as he didn't run out into the snow again, he thought to himself. The memory rushed into his mind just as the snow and wind had flown around him.

While Germany and Poland talked Russia noticed how late it had gotten and decided it was time for him to leave as well. He said his farewells to them both and headed home. His mind was running furiously, as it usually was. America's eyes, he just couldn't get them out of his head.

Those dark eyes of his.

The strange language he spoke, his episodes as he calls them.

America is a weird country, everyone knew that. But this held something more. Something Russia wanted to find out, to know. He didn't want to guess, to make assumptions. He wanted to know for sure.

But America hadn't given much of an explanation. And every time he tried to bring up the caves, he shut down and changed the subject. He needed to find that sight again, that village. Those strange people, those kids. They held the answers Russia wanted. If he could trace back his steps to the camp, or the path they took from the caves themselves when they escaped, maybe he can approach peacefully. Is that even possible now? Has enough time passed?

"Save it for laterrr, Rrrussia, " he shook his head and disrupted his own thoughts. He couldn't do much right now, he had responsibilities to take care of for the winter. But once the snow melted and it warmed up again, maybe. Maybe then he can feed his curiosity. For now, however, he'll have to wait.

As the evening settled in, the cold brushing his cheek he was left to wonder one thing: if America was walking home in the cold.

# Gone

**Russia's POV**

One would think trying to find a village you were kidnapped in would be simple. But no, it wasn't.

I needed to rest my feet from the long hike, so I sat down on a nearby fallen log. It was still cold, the spring kind of cold. I knew I would be fine, and it would warm up later in the day. I needed to get up early to catch Vietnam before he went to one of his classes.

I stay sitting on the log for a little while longer, taking a drink from my water bottle occasionally before deciding to carry on.

Vietnam had remembered where we had entered the woods, taking me to it. I had thanked him and told him not to tell anyone. He gave me his word, and I trusted him on it. It's not like anyone would want to go against me anyways.

I had to rely on my memory, but it was fuzzy. What happened was months ago, and when there was hardly any vegetation. Now it was green, turning towards the beginning of summer. Things looked different, and I couldn't remember the path we took well. I know I had tripped over something at some point, but when and where I wasn't sure. The clearest memory than was waking up tied in the caves. I knew I could find it if I could find that village. We had passed the village on our way back before we ran into America's family. If I remember correctly I could find the area where we walked from the caves.

Or the thing that attacked us would get me. Either way, I'll get to where I need.
I looked around some more, trying to find something that seemed familiar. The path had to be close now, we didn't walk that long. We couldn't have, at least. I stopped where I was and held my eyes shut trying to remember the walk before the path. It really couldn't have been that long. I remembered mostly glaring at Canada.

Around noon I had sat down again and ate the small sandwich I packed. My phone buzzed in my pocket and I saw that it was Belarus.

"Hello?"

"Хей, тебя не было на агрокультуре. Неужели тебя опять отвлекал твой бойфренд? (Hey, you weren't in our agriculture class. Did you get distracted by your boyfriend again?)"

I rolled my eyes and swallowed the bite of food I had. "Америка не мой парень. (America is not my boyfriend.)"

"Так я и не говорила, что имею ввиду Америку. (I never said it was America I was talking about,)" she laughed to herself, thinking she was funny.

"Ха, ха, ха, чё тебе надо? (Ha, ha ha, what did you want?)"

"Просто хотела удостовериться, что с тобой все в порядке. Та записка, я не знала, что ты будешь отсутствовать весь день напролет. (Just wanted to make sure you were okay. The note, I didn't know you were going to be gone all day.)"

I looked around, weighing my options. "Завтра меня должно быть тоже не будет. В зависимости от моих ощущений. (I might be gone tomorrow, too. It will depend on how I feel.)"

"Не пытаешься ли ты сбежать от чего-то? (Are you trying to run from something?)"

"Ага, от вас ребятки. (Yeah, you guys.)"

"Ой, да перестань (Oh stop), " she laughed and I knew if she could she'd hit my shoulder. "Я же имела ввиду твои наочевиднейшие чувства к Амереке. (I meant like your obvious feelings for America.)"

I hung up the phone. After a second, she called back.

"Прекрати это. (You need to quit doing that!)" Belarus immediately scolded, since this was not the first time I had hung up the phone to

avoid a conversation.

I always answered when they called back and then usually talked about it.
I laughed at her annoyed tone but decided to answer her regardless, "Здесь нет никаких чувств, он просто напросто еще тот раздражающий товарищ. (there are no feelings, he's just an annoying comrade.)"

"Ага, конечно, я в это сразу же поверю, как только ты и Украина начнёте хорошо ладить. Ну, или РАЗ уж на то пошло, то Армения с Азербайджаном. (Yeah, I'll believe that as soon as you and Ukraine get along. Or Armenia and Azerbaijan, for that matter.)"

She wasn't wrong. That's what I feared.

"Послушай-ка, Бел, (Look, Bel,)" I sighed ad rubbed my eyes. "Ты ведь прекрасно помнишь, чему учил нас папа. Часть его поучений все еще крепко сидит у меня в голове, а особенно то, что он говорил непосредственно лично мне. (You know what dad taught us. Some of that sticks with me, also what he told me directly.)"

I heard her sigh on the other line, a quiet little pause between us. "Россия, я знаю, что ты слушался его лучше, чем любой из нас, и даже сейчас продолжаешь его слушать, но, (Russia, I know you listen to him better than any of us did, and you still do, but,)" she went silent for a moment, "Но может быть, хотя бы разочек, но всё таки возможно он был не прав. Просто прислушайся к своим чувствам, тогда может ты и в самом деле сможешь получать удовольствие от всего этого. (but maybe for once, maybe he was wrong. Just listen to how you feel, you might actually have fun.)"

I didn't answer and she took that as a response.

"Смотри, мне надо будет (сейчас) уйти. До завтра? (Look, I have to leave. Ill see you tomorrow then?)"

"да."

"Люблю тя, братишка. (Love ya' bro.)"
"И я тебя тоже. (Love you too.)"

"еслилюбишьамерекускажичто (Ifyouloveamericasaywhat.)"

"Перестань, я тебе не Киргизия. (Please, I'm not Kyrgyzstan.)"

She laughed and hung up. I looked at the phone to check the time and thought about my travel time. Maybe I had passed the trail and didn't notice it? Maybe I can try to find a clearing and determine my position by the sun. The moon was rather bright that night, and if my memory serves well I should be able to find a general direction using that and the sun.

I decided on that, and after a few more hours I knew I needed a new plan. Why was finding this village so hard?

That night, how far did I walk? In what direction? And for how long in each? I tried to do my best from memory but what more could I do? It was dark then. The beams of flashlights had distorted my vision. I couldn't make anything out.

Just like right now. Nothing looked familiar. I couldn't tell where I was. It was getting darker now, too, I might have to set up a camp for the night. If I couldn't place where I was, then I knew I had to be lost. I had no time for panic, I'd have to get a camp set up and settle in for the night.

I hadn't planned for a night, so I had no tent but I did have materials to make a small shelter. I looked around, trying to find a good spot for it and settled on two trees. I scanned the two, not so far from each other, extended branches to assemble a roof on, with extending beams out from that to the ground to create a wall. I can do it on either side, making a tent from nature. I've done it before, it's simple enough and can last a night.

It took me around an hour to make that and I started working on digging out a small pit for a fire. It was a tunnel, so no wind could blow it out and right at the entrance to keep me warm but allow now smoke inside my small hut. That didn't take me long, and soon I was sitting in soft darkness, cooking a can of soup over the small

fire. The nights were cold, but not enough to make me shiver.

Not yet, from what I could tell.

I stirred the contents of the can and sighed, smelling the soup. I kept my Glock by my side, just in case any wild animals come to investigate the smell.

I spared a glance at my phone, ignoring the notifications and checked the time. 10 pm.

The natural sounds of the woods soothed any worries I had, hearing insects and happily noticing nothing was moving close to me.

To pass the time I grabbed my flashlight and tied it to the wood above to act as an inner light. I pulled out my father's journal and opened it to the page I left off. I had read the book from beginning to end, numerous times, in a desperate attempt to remember some fond childhood memories that he mentions from time to time. I knew the pages to skip over, ones that brought up bad memories or I knew ones that had hurt him.

I suppose it was a way to try and connect with him. To push away the pain.

The paper I had to treat carefully, mostly out of preservation of the written text, so I moved slowly as I scanned the words written in Russian cursive. This entry he was writing down notes for himself, things to remember to get from the store. He was always forgetful, I guess he must have carried this pocket journal as a way to remember key things. Events to further record. The unofficial jot notes.

Since it seemed unofficial, less business with half-written words, it felt more like him. Like my actual dad, and not the businessman, or warrior he was.

I smiled at the words, reading his reminder to buy food. The kind that Uzbekistan liked.

A twig behind me snapped and I looked up into the darkness, holding still.

Small light steps continued behind me, running away. Just a small animal.

I hadn't realized I had picked up my gun until I set it down. I breathed out slowly to calm any nervousness I had. The last time I was in these woods I was kidnapped, so nervousness and the ready to defend were understandable.

The flashlight caught my attention and I thought of the possibility of it bringing attention to myself. Perhaps it would be best if I turned it off as soon as I could. When the soup was done, I ate as quickly as I could, drank some water, and turned off the flashlight. I stayed still, waiting and listening laying down in my shelter. My gun was by my side, my knife in my pocket. I would be okay.

I shut my eyes and fell asleep.

**America's POV**

I blinked when I heard what Germany said.

"Wait, he's what?"

Germany nodded, grabbing my arm and pulling me away from the rest of the crowd. I noticed Ukraine glance over at me suspiciously before walking away with one of her siblings. Georgia I think his name was.

"No one knovs vere he is," Germany continued and I looked back to him. "It's only peen tvo days, put it's veird zat he vould chust valk out of zee houze like he did."

"Who told you he did that?" I asked him, trying not to glance over at the small group of his siblings. I could feel eyes on me, though. What if they knew something?

"Pelarus told Boland," and as if he knew my paranoia, he added, "sche's cloze vith Ruzia und vould zay zomezing to us if hanyzing pad habened to him. Sche only zaid it vas veird, he neffer vent cambing as zudtenly as he did."

"Yeah, family wouldn't murder him. They'd be suspected first," I

tried to make a joke and it worked a little bit. Ger-man did smile and roll his eyes at me. Still, the piercing eyes bothered me, but when I looked I was almost relieved to see it was just Sunrise starring me down. Almost.

China, who was talking to him, waved to me slightly before pulling Sunrise's attention back to him.

"Yeah, he's probably fine. He might be on some weird Russian hunting expedition."

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**Russia's POV**

I read America's text just in time for my phone to die.

"A Rrrussian hunting expedition?"

Of course, he would think I was on something like that. I'll have to tell him that I was, I'm not sure how he'd react to the truth.

I put my phone in my bag and swung that back onto my back. My feet had started to hurt and I had taken a small break, checking on my messages and texts to make sure no one thought something bad happened to me. I got the chance to message back Poland, so I knew he would tell Germany who would tell America that I was okay.

When I woke up I started walking and found the path, uncertainly easy. Once I was on it, I knew which way to go from there. Throughout the whole way, my hand was rested on my knife, just in case. I wasn't sure if I was close to it or not, but it was early in the day so I should have enough time to get to the village.

The quietness and my solitude plunged me into my thoughts. Unfortunately what came up was my dream last night. It started normal, as normal as they can be at least. It was some weird event with the apocalypse but it had a few zombies thrown in, and aliens for some reason. But the moment that stuck with me was when America showed up randomly or was with me the entire time I wasn't too sure, and he had to save an alien from a rockslide and
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nearly got himself killed. My dream self dragged him out of it, was holding his badly injured body, and confessed my love for him. Then we. We made out.

I rubbed my mouth just thinking about it.

This wasn't the first dream something like that happened. I would wake up from it in a panic and have it stuck in my head for hours afterward, maybe even a few days. It always made looking and talking to America weird. I even had a dream of a different version of me talking to me about America, even calling me a bitch at one point.

"So," his voice had echoed like a long-forgotten memory, "do you zink you'll tell him zat? Orrr wait out the feelings like a little bitch?"

I could hear him now, insulting me for my reactions and decisions. I can't even tell him off, nor can I tell him he's wrong.

I noticed the path widen and I looked up.

How?

It. It was gone.

The village. It was gone.

**Narrator's POV**

"Canada?" Ukraine raised a brow in shock, but that left her when she gave it another thought. "Vell, he is nice. I can't blame him."

Belarus had just told Ukraine about Kazakhstan's crush on Canada, while the mentioned two where in the living room going head to head at a game called 'Guess Who'. Their laughter and complaints could be heard by the two, which made the sisters laugh.

"So," Belarus spun around wiping her hands on her homemade apron, "I vas vondering if you vanted to help me get zem together?"

Ukraine thought about it but then nodded yes. She knew Kaz well

and had come to know Canada closely, too. The two would be a good couple, complementing each other and be adorable. She couldn't see a reason they wouldn't work. Apart from genders, but she knew Canada was pansexual so that wasn't really a problem.

"How vould ve do zat? Does Kaz know ve are going to be doing zis?"

"I mean, I don't zink he vould stop us if ve even tried. He really likes him, but doesn't know how to approach him about it." Belarus went into further detail as she began to clean the kitchen up. She explained how he had tried to tell him a few times but allowed a distraction to happen, and had confessed to him but not in English. So Canada didn't know what he said, and Kaz made up an excuse.

Ukraine took a moment to put away some food and other cooking materials before adding to the open-ended idea list. "Ve could set up a sort of a romantic night for zem. Or maybe I could just tell Canada."

"What if he turns him down?" Belarus protested quickly. "Or just sees him as a friend? Oh, zat would crush him."

"Bell, you know zat's a possibility whenever someone asks someone out," Ukraine reminded her. "And zey always have the right to say no."

"I know, but Uky. Kaz used to be so serious, I would hate to see him be zat way again."

"Would you rather have him be like Kyrgie?"

"Oh hell no!"

The two laughed together, knowing how childish and irresponsible Kyrgie could get. The country liked to party in the mountains for heavens' sake.

"I don't vant to have to deal with two of zem," Belarus finished wiping down the counters. "But maybe you can ask him about Kaz, you know? See how he feels?"

Ukraine nodded, remembering people aren't always as forward as her. So she understood the need to be discreet.

Outside their home, Russia walked up to the front porch and stomped off some of the mud and dirt that had gathered on his boots. It was late at night, the sun setting behind the forest that surrounded them. He heard laughter inside and the recognizable high pitched laughter of Kazakhstan. He smiled to himself at the sounds of a happy home, taking off his boots to not bring the dirt inside. Undoubtedly, Belarus had just swept the floors. He would get yelled at if he did.

"Russia is home!" Kaz immediately shouted upon seeing the Russian.

"Hey Kaz, hey Kanada," Russia greeted the two, growing used to Canada's presence. He had managed to calm down his overly protective brotherly instincts enough to not give Canada the cold shoulder and glares whenever he was over. He got along well with his siblings, particularly Kazakhstan, so he couldn't stay that way to him for long.

"Where vere you, I zought you said you vould be back yesterday." Belarus came marching into the small entranceway. "You didn't ansver any of my texts."

"My phone died," Russia answered the last one before pulling out something from his bag. It was a small shiny rock that had bits of reflective surfaces in it that glimmered when moved in the light. "Found zis forrr you."

"Aww, zank you," Belarus took the rock smiling. She liked collecting shiny things. "Zis doesn't let you off the hook. I vas vorried."

To prove her point she slapped his arm a few times and Russia just tiredly accepted it. He had been walking nonstop and his feet were sore, all he wanted at that point was sleep. To get off of his feet, more than anything.

"Im going to sleep, you kan handle everrrything rrright?"

"You act like ve haven't been home alone."

"I don't know sometimes."

"Oh, hush. It is nice to have you back, it felt a little veird here."

Russia raised a brow. "What do you mean?"

Belarus shrugged. "The house, it just felt off. I zink it vas just because I vas a little unsettled by your sudden disappearance."

Russia looked at her as she waved off the worry with a small laugh. He couldn't help but think it had to mean something, especially with all the weird things that have been happening lately. Or his increased paranoia due to his tiredness.

After a little while, Russia was laying in bed, showered, dressed, but now having trouble falling asleep. He turned onto his other side, tucking the pillow under his arm hoping that a new position would help him fall asleep. He was wrong and instead was left alone to his thoughts again.

Why had that village been gone?

The entire village, all the structures, everything was gone. There was still the clearing, a little overgrown with grass and moss, but the buildings. It was all gone. He couldn't have been in the wrong place, there were still traces of it being there. The ground was disturbed, obvious marks where those structures were.

It was like someone picked up the entire thing and disappeared with it. He had stayed there another night, hoping to find some sort of sign of something to tell him where he should go. There wasn't anything and by morning he decided he should head home.

Defeated and a little annoyed he figured he'd have to try something else.

He only wanted to keep trying since America had another one of his episodes around him a few days prior. They had been walking to the library for some assignment they had agreed to work on together when he started throwing up the black stuff. Russia picked him up and ran him to his house. It was close to where they were so he had gotten there in no time and Australia helped him with the

episode. To help make sure America didn't run anywhere, hurt himself, or anyone else they had come to the conclusion that it was best if they restrained him to his bed.

Seeing his friend like that almost broke Russia's heart, but he was able to keep his composure and try to confront America. He needed answers for this, he needed to find a way to stop this.

Even if it was the last thing he did.

**((This was meant to be posted with the others but Wattpad told me no and decided to glitch out like a little bit- But here it is! The Russian translations provided by LorelySeal . Thank you so much, give them some love everybody! Anywho, that's three chapters in one day, and it may have been due to a month-long break but im still counting it as a win!**

**Thanks for tuning in everybody, I'll see you all soon!))**

**Ësgöge'ae comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Beach Day

**A little warning, the F word is written in this, and you all know I don't mean fuck.**

**Narrator's POV**

Once again, North Korea was being dragged to a gathering by his brother.

As South was going on about another song he was writing, North blocked him out and focused on the view in front of him. The long path made of white sand made it hard for him to keep his formal strides, his sandals slipping occasionally. A mess of green trees grew around the sides, their branches overhead creating a tunnel to the beach they were heading to. Exotic birds sung in the trees, flying from branch to branch. The warm air annoyed North, as he couldn't wear his usual uniform and had resorted to casual attire. A light tank top with dark green shorts and black sandals. Color scheme-wise, it was the same.

Philippines had invited a bunch of countries over for a beach day, South being one of them. At first, Phil was kind of against South bringing along his brother but was then talked into it.

"See I told you it looked amazing!" South exclaimed as they stepped out of the shadows and into the bright sunlight. North took a moment to adjust his eyes to the light, cupping his hand over them to help. The view was indeed beautiful, one that he wouldn't deny. The bright light blue waters mixed with white sand and a clear sky above. It was picture perfect, a scene from a pamphlet.

It took his breath away.

The one thing that would make it all better was if he was the only one there.

In the waters, he spotted a few different countries, the ones he

immediately noticed however was America, Russia, Vietnam, and the one who invited them running up to the two.

South and Phil greeted each other and quickly went into a conversation, to which North ignored. He looked around trying to see who else was there, spotting Canada and Mexico in the shade of an umbrella, Indonesia, and Malaysia sitting on what looked like a patio with beach chairs and a few bright umbrellas. The beach was a small spot, almost cupped by forested cliff-sides. They weren't that high, he could still see the landscape behind them. Movement caught his eye and he focused on top of one of the cliffs. There he spotted another country, a little too far away to make out any defining features beyond his blue skin, standing on top of the cliff.

North watched with interest as he saw the figure get close to the edge then turn and walk away. They disappeared into the trees that grew on top of the cliff, and he leaned over slightly to try and see where the unknown country went to. After a moment, he spotted them running from the trees towards the cliff's edge. They jumped, did a spin, and landed into the water in a dive.

"Who was that?" North gasped watching the figure emerge from the water.

"Oh that's my brother Martial Law," Phil answered then went back to talking with South.

North didn't know Philippines even had a brother. Then again, he didn't really care to know. Martial walked along the waters edge then up to the patio where he stayed standing. Probably talking to the countries there.

"He doesn't bite, you can talk to him if you want, you know?" South pokes North's side for fun and North shot him a glare.

"I'll just sit and read."

Sticking to his usual isolation, North picked a spot where he spotted an empty chair and umbrella to sit at. The moment he did, he took out his book he brought with him and continued off on the last page he had left off on.

As he sat in isolated peace, the other countries noticed him and breathed out a sigh of relief.

"Whoo, I thought I'd have to throw these hands." America laughed, holding up his hands in fists and punching the air. Russia rolled his eyes and pushed America into the water, getting a laugh from Vietnam. That prompted a fight, America jumping out from the water and knocking Russia down, who bumped into Vietnam and pushed him down.

Canada laughed seeing his brother try to run away from the two countries chasing him. Mexico was sitting next to him, both of them having towels on the sand to relax on in the shade of an umbrella. It was hot out, and Mexico was wearing his vest over his shirt, which he really regretted doing but had no choice. Canada had expressed his worry when Mexico decided to come to the gathering. He didn't want his wings to be found out, and people might think something was up.

They came up with the excuse that Mexico couldn't swim, and just wanted to hang out on the beach and maybe walk along the water's edge. It worked, no one was the wiser about anything, and Mexico was relived. And if he was honest with himself, he wanted to come along because he wanted to see Canada shirtless.

Which he was, and sitting really close to Mexico, too. His pale white skin, the scars from his top surgery, he couldn't help but stare whenever Canada looked away. He was definitely pleased with himself.

North heard a loud shrill of laughter and looked up from his page to see the small country Mexico laughing with Canada. From his spot, he couldn't see Canada that well, but seeing his white skin made him frown.

"Why must she ruin her body like that?" He mumbled to himself before turning back to his page.

South looked over at his brother and frowned. He looked angry, but at least he was busying himself in his book instead of trying to pick another fight.

“I still don’t get why you wanted him to come along, you know he’s kind of an asshole,” Phil said as he sat down next to him on the wooden steps of the patio.

“Yeah. I just want to get him to see that he can have fun if he actually tries to talk to other countries.”

“He does talk to them,” Phil chuckled, “he just threatens them when he does.”

South didn’t laugh and just sighed. He was hoping that if he lightened up he would have fun and maybe wouldn’t be so uptight. He couldn’t get over their last fight, he had shouted some slurs at him and even made him cry. South didn’t want to fight anymore and had just let North yell. He couldn’t believe that he and Japan would try to set him up with China, his idol, and a male no less. If he had given China a chance, he knew North would have been happy. He could see it in his eyes, he knew his brother, or at least he’d like to think he does.

“Hey, Phil. Who the fuck is that?”

Behind them stood Martial. He was standing there, a drink in hand and water running down from his shorts and hair. His eyes were looking at North, so Phil answered him explaining that he was South’s brother.

"The angry one?"

South nodded.

"You should go talk to him!" Phil suggested excitedly, to which South immeadiently tried to get him to shut up. Phil ignored him, and so did his brother. He knew the countries here were more Phil's friends anyway and he had come along to make sure his brother didn't get into any trouble. North was a country that seemed to be an outcast type. Talking to him would be interesting.

Instead of walking over to him to strike up a conversation, he turned back to Indonesia and Malaysia and started talking to them.

"I don't want to make North angry right now, can you please just

leave it be?" South pleaded and Phil thought for a second before agreeing.

"Why do you still live with him if he makes you this scared?"

South didn't know how to answer that question. So he just looked over to the water leaving it unanswered. He was his brother. Why wouldn't he? Family has to stick together right?

"Hey, South looks kind of down." Vietnam pointed out, tapping Russia's shoulder. Russia raised a brow, wondering why he had stopped trying to help him put America in a head lock. He turned to see what he mean and did notice the thousand yard stare and slumped over posture of South.

"You can say his mood went south." America chuckled, struggling to get his head out of Russia's tight hold. After his joke, Russia dropped him into the water than when he broke through the water, coughing and trying to catch his breath, Russia pushed him back down.

Vietnam walked out of the water, moving out of the way of Martial, Indo, and Malaysia who were running towards the water. He swore he heard Martial say something about drowning America, but just shrugged it off. It looked like Mal and Indo were trying to chase after him to stop him anyway.

"Hey, South, what's wrong?" Vietnam asked when he came up to South. He looked up at the country and waved him aside.

"Im fine, I'm just watching the birds."

"Phil, what's wrong with him?"

"Oh, he's upset about another fight with his brother."

"Phil!"

"Do you want me to talk to him?"

South looked at Vietnam uncertain. "Talk to him?"

"Yeah, tell him to stop his shit?"

South shook his head no. "Its fine, it was actually my fault this time anyways. See, I got involved with his personal relationships with China and he got mad at me and Japan."

Vietnam nodded along with his hands in his swim short pockets. "I see. Well, he does look up to China a lot. He probably just didn't want you to do anything that would paint him in any negative lighting"

"Yeah, sure." South shrugged and looked back towards the birds. They dove down towards the water, flying in the sky in big swoops. They looked graceful, diving, and soaring. Birds probably had no care in the world, just existing and living life. It's peaceful flying in the air.

"Hey, did you guys ever wonder what it would be like to fly? With like, actual wings?"

"Oh, all the time." Phil looked into the sky, his multicolored eyes beaming up and matching the diverse sky. "That would be so amazing wouldn't it be?"

"Seems scary. I dunno, heights aren't my thing" Vietnam took a set next to the guys.

"Don't you climb trees all the time?"

"That's as far as I'll go. At least then I have some connection to the ground, too. If Im flying in the air, it'll be like I have nothing to hold onto if I fall."

"Hey, do you all got something to drink? It's so hot out." Mexico asked the three as he and Canada walked up to the trio. Phil jumped up to hand them each a drink from their cooler.

"You'd be a little cooler without all those layers on there Mexico," Vietnam pointed out. "You're almost as crazy as South here."

South was wearing what he called a summer hoodie, which was a hoodie without the sleeves. It had its usual colored patterns, bright

and vibrant all-round, with the coolness of freed arms. He looked at his outfit and wondered what was wrong with it.

"Yeah, I know. I can normally handle the heat, but I was just up north for a little while in the cold, ya' know?" Mex explained, taking the drink offered to him from Phil. Canada took his as well and thanked the smaller country.

"Hey, Mex, what do you think flying is like? Like with wings?" Phil asked innocently, unbeknownst to Mexico's personal experiences.

Canada stepped closer to Mex, a little nervous by the question. Mex, acting rather unfazed finished a sip of the cold refreshing drink of some fruity water. "Cold."

South perked his head up and raised a brow. "What do you mean?

"Oh, I just imagine it being cold up there in the air."

South nodded but his gaze lingered on Mexico for a second longer, then it shifted to see how nervous Canada looked. "You doing okay there, Can-Can?"

Canada smiled and nodded, wiping the sweat off his forehead. "Of course, I just have a headache, that's all."

"It could be this heat, maybe you should get into the water for a little bit."

"Yeah, I can just walk into the water, that way you won't be alone," Mexico suggested to him, the two walking away from the patio. Canada did feel a little overheated, the drink helped, but a dip in the water wouldn't hurt. He just didn't want to blow Mexico's cover.

"Don't worry, it'll be okay. You can make it look like you are trying to help me stay on my feet if that helps." Mexico made an excuse for staying close to him, plus bonus points if he got to hold his hand and hang onto him.

"Lets set down our drinks then," Canada agreed to Mexico's idea. He did feel like he needed the cold water, plus it would be fun to splash Mexico a few times. He would look so adorable whining

about it.

America watched his brother and Mex walk towards their little area they made for themselves from the height of Russia's shoulders. His moment of distraction was all Mal needed to push America's shoulders and knocking him and Russia down into the water.

"Haha, yes!" Indo exclaimed from under

Mal, holding onto his legs tightly so he wouldn't fall.

"Damn it Amerrrika, " Russia said when he got up front he water. America spat out water into his face and laughed. Then he dove under the water to run from Russia, who was wiping the water from his eyes.

"Wherrre did he go?" Russia looked around himself in the water, trying to find him to tackle him or something. He didn't know, just whatever to get revenge.

"Wait, I think he's-" Indo said before his leg was pulled out from under him and he was knocked into the water, taking Malaysia down with him.

America jumped from the water then, laughing and pointing at the two now in the water and wiping it from their faces.

His loud shrill laughter made North wince and look up from his book once again. He frowned before returning back to the page he was on. His finger rubbed the edges of the lines as he read, playing with the pages subconsciously as he read the text. Just as he read the last line he held the page to turn it. He jumped when a hand was placed over his and a male voice spoke behind him and said, "not yet, I'm not done."

North looked behind him and was startled by the closeness of the stranger. He had blue skin and the same colored patterns as Phil, but the red and blue switched on his flag. It was Martial he realized. He wasn't looking at North though, and instead kept his golden eyes on the book in his hands.

"Okay, you can turn it now."

"What the hell are you doing?" North shut the book, his finger holding his spot.

"Reading the book, same as you." Martial raised a brow, a lack of clear emotion in his half-lidded eyes. North noticed hownclose he was to him, practically a thumb's width away. He leaned forward, trying to put some distance between the two. He wondered how he didn't feel his breath on his neck, or why he hadn't heard him.

"I mean what are you doing here?"

"Uh, you're on my family's land. Why wouldn't I be?"

"No, I meant why are you next to me?"

Martial shrugged. "You seemed interesting. And I wanted to know what you were reading."

North looked at his book, the title of it The Fifth Photo. It was printed in Korean, sonhow Martial read it along with him was impressive.

"You know Korean?"

Martial nodded and leaned his arms against the back of the chair to get a little comfortable.

"Speak it?"

"Not really. Maybe like three words, I can read enough of it, though."

North nodded and looked at the cover. He picked up the bookmark and played with it in his hand. "Have you read this before?"

"Yeah, actually. It's about that one girl who becomes a prostitute, right?"

North nodded, not worrying about his dpoiling the book. He had read it plenty of times, being fond of reading. For a hothead with a twitchy finger, he enjoyed the peace and calm. And to find someone who read the same book as him, it was rather nice. He asked how

he liked the book and the two went into a conversation about it. North viewed the book as more evidence to not fall for the seduction of capitalism, while Martial saw it similarly but more as a warning in trusting the wrong people.

"I saw you jump off the cliff, " North pointed to the cliff to the left of them. Martial smiled proudly and nodded.

"Yeah, it's a nice spot to jump. The water is deep there and it's safe." He looked down at North and his smile grew wider. "You wanna jump off of it with me?"

North's eyes widen and he looked to the,cliff again. The jump was high, and he no doubt was scared to even picture himself even nearing the edge of it.

"I don't think so," North leaned away from the cliffside as if that would get him away from the idea itself.

"You scared?" Martial teased poking at his shoulder. North nodded and responded with an, "obviously."

"Come on, you'll like it."

North frowned, looking at him baffled at why jumping off a cliff seemed like a good idea. But when he looked at him, he found himself only noticing his closeness, his rising and settling chest, the beads of sweat on his forehead, his relaxed posture, the sharpness of his teeth, and the sun reflecting off the small traces of water on his skin and dripping from his hair.

"Do you have to stand so close?" North looked away, his frown deepening

"I don't have to, but someone did take my seat. Your lucky I'm not kicking you out of it," Martial gestured to the chair North was on. North just smiled and leaned further back, acting comfortable.

"I don't see your name on it."

Martial leaned closer to his face and North's eyes widen. "Don't make me get a pen little man."

The sound of someone walking up to them caught the countries attention and they saw the shadowed figure of Russia.

"Hey, it's the big man himself." Martial waved to Russia, who nodded his head at him. He didn't really know Russia, knowing him only by name. North managed a wave at him but was still reeling by how Martial looked at him and how close he had gotten.

"You must be Marrrtial," Russia acknowledged the newish face and offered a hand to shake. The two exchange a few words, North not really noticing. He was busy fiddling with his hands and deep in thought about recent events.

"Norrrth Korrrea, you good? You look upset."

North looked up at Russia and noticed how he was seated along with his nervous hands. He relaxed his shoulders a little and nodded.

"I just shook him up by asking if he wanted to jump off that cliff with me." Martial poked fun at North again, smiling his cocky smirk at him. North furrowed his eyebrows and tried his best to scowl while feeling slightly embarrassed.

"I am not 'shook up'," North mocked his words and crossed his arms. "I just don't see the fun in it."

You'll see it if you jump," Martial retorted, keeping his sarcastic smartass tone that North was finding infuriating. "Come on, it's not that dangerous. Plus the thrill of it is what's the best."

Russia raised a brow to how North seemed to be flustered looking at Martial, trying his best to look angry but his expression kept faltering. He was suddenly reminded of the time when North was smiling at China while dancing with him and even seemed to be embarrassed by the knowledge of it and China finding out. It couldn't mean what he was starting to think, could it?

"Martial! Can you help me for a second!?" Philippines yelled from the other side of the beach, Martial looking over to see his brother waving him down.

"Hang on you two, I'll be back in a moment." Martial patted North's shoulder and started jogging away. He turned around, still walking backward with a little extra bounce in his step and called to North, "you are jumping off that cliff with me before this day ends! You'll love it, I promise!"

North watched the country run away to help his brother, examining his full figure before he got too far away. His skin was a dark blue, but a vibrant one compared to his own skin. He was taller than himself, a slight build with thicker calves and how the sun glistened off his skin seemed to frame him on the scene. The warm coloring of his eyes was drilled into his head when he leaned close to him. The small distance between them, his halflidded eyes and drips of sweat on his forehead, it made him almost be able to hear the heavy pants and groans.

"Norrrth, you'rrre starrring at him."

The smaller country jumped when his thoughts were interrupted by the Russian's voice.

***it's in this paragraph***

"What, no I wasn't!" North scowled and grabbed his book. He had set it on the arm of the chair when he and Martial engaged in conversation, finding no need to have it open while he conversed. But now he was using as a distraction from what he was thinking. He would not dare think of something so unnatural, much less be fazed by it. He wasn't a faggot.

"You clearrrly werrre." Russa sat down on the sand next to the chair, which had him be about shoulder height with the Korean. "You acted same vay vith China, too."

North looked panicky at Russia at the mention of the name. He knew what Russia was referring to, he had been thinking about it ever since that night. Thinking about it too much, according to himself. And it must have been obvious enough for his own brother to notice

"There's something wrong with me," North confessed, slouching and

covering his chest with his arms. "I can't stop thinking about it, Russia. I fear that," he gulped and couldn't bring himself to say it outwardly, and to another country, no less.

"Fearrr zat you might be gay?" Russia raised a brow, seeing North lower his head in defeat. He gave out a weak groan and covered his face with his hands, ashamed of himself and his suspicions. His face buzzed with heat at hearing the words out loud.

"But, I probably am just overthinking something that doesn't mean anything. Don't you think?" North looked to Russia, peeking through his fingers. He hoped that Russia would convince him that he's just worried and panicked too much about nothing and isn't actually gay.

"Please," he added in desperation, "please tell me I'm not gay"

Russia chuckled and looked at him with a smile. "I don't zink I can."

North again groaned and hid his face again. "This can't be happening."

"It's happening. Do you vant me to talk to Marrrtial forrr you?"

"NO!" North screamed, sitting up and looking at Russia with wide eyes. "No, please don't! Don't say a word of this to anyone, no one can even know that this is a possibility!"

Russia laughed again, trying to calm the usual overly stoic country down from an apparent panic attack. He said he wouldn't, but he knew he would mention something to Martial just because he knew North wouldn't do anything to confront his feelings.

"Liking guys isn't a bad zing, rrremember? And plenty of kountrrries know what it's like to feel like you'rrre feeling sormething wrrrong." He reminded North, who looked deeply upset. Instead of helping him, North only felt like he was defeated in the worst battle ever.

"You have no idea what this feels like."

Russia looked away from North and swept the landscape. He heard a shout and a loud splash, looking over in time to see America

getting up and wiping the water from his face.

He smiled

"I vouldn't be too surrre about zat."

**((Boom baby! How you all doing tonight, today, or to..afternoon? Evening? Time frame that you are currently in! Welcome to the exciting ride of grumpy**

**countries dealing with their sexualities! Whooo! Also for any of you that follow my Instagram, I have a mini-comic thing coming out soon that may provide somne insight on a few characters. Maybe start or confirm a few theories ;) I can't wait to show you all!))**

**Thanks to Official_Problem for helping me get this chapter back! Them and Potato helped me get a lot of these back. I am forever in your guys debt**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Fucking Finally

**Russia's POV**

Belarus and Kaz walked beside me as we made our way to the entrance of the school. Bel was talking about her class, Kaz adding in his jokes and suggestions to her questions. They both were laughing and smiling at whatever it was they were talking about. I was trying my best to pay attention, trying to talk and laugh with them, but I couldn't help but keep my focus forward.

Ahead of us was America, New Zealand, and Australia. They were talking amongst themselves as well, America's laughter stealing my attention the most.  I couldn't help but smile at seeing him look carefree and relaxed.

But when I noticed it, I would stop myself and try to pay attention to the conversation.

"Такім чынам, Зе старэйшы за Аўстралію, якую я доўга не ведаў. (So Ze is actually older than Australia, which I didn't know for the longest time.)"

"сен қалай үлкен құрлықты сағынасың оның орнына аралды тауып алыңыз? (How do you miss a big continent and find an island on the other side of it instead?)"

"Лодкі такія смешныя, напэўна? (Boats are funny like that I guess?)"

I nodded along once more, not finding anything to say. I didn't really care who was older than who, but I know Belarus was close friends with New Zealand and she probably cared.

America's loud voice and laughter caught my attention again and I looked to see what he was doing. He was holding his bag and a pen out, acting as a sword and shield to fence against Australia. He

looked ridiculous acting like a child, and I chuckled softly watching him.

My vision went dark for a moment as I felt the fur of my ushanka cover my eyes, someone's arms wrapped around me tightly and them jumping onto my shoulders.

"Russia, look! It's the American you like so much!" Kazakstan shouted, trying to get his attention.

"Kaz, be quiet!" I tried to get him to get off of me and to let go of my head, my face buzzing warmly from the embarrassment. I got him to move enough for me to lift my ushanka from my eyes and saw that America had turned around. He saw me and waved to me, smiling brightly. I waved back slightly, seething in embarrassment.

"Ай, ты ўсміхаешся! (Aww, you're smiling.)" Bel poked my cheek and I swatted her hand away.

"Нет. Каз просто дергает меня за моё лицо, (No, I wasn't. Kaz is just pulling on my face,)" I pushed Kaz off of my shoulders, his wings hitting me as I did. He needs to stop making a habit of jumping onto my shoulders, I almost body-slammed him a few times cause he gave me no warning.

"Өтінемін бауырым, ол саған ұнайды. Ол саған ұнайды көп. (Please, brother, you like him. You like him a lot.)" Kaz pulled on my ushanka flaps to cover my face again, at this point to irritate me. "Сіз шындықты жаба алмайсыз (You can't hide the truth.)"

I glared at him and adjusted my appearance once more. "В последний раз повторяю, Америка просто мой товарищ, мой друг! (For the last time, I'm not gay! America is just a comrade, a friend!)"

The two stood in front of me, their arms crossed and eyebrows raised. Their entire stance and expression said their words for them. They didn't believe a word I said in that sentence.

Bel rolled her eyes but looked past me, saying, "Эй, хто цалуе

Америка? (Hey, who's that kissing America?)"

"Кто кому делает чего!? (Who's who doing what!?)" I spun around, curling my hands into fists ready to punch whoever it was touching my America. I stopped mid-step when I noticed that America was at his locker still talking with his brothers. There was no other country close enough to them to have even been kissing him, either.

Belarus's laughter from behind me, along with Kaz's snickering made me realized I was just tricked. My face fell and I let out a deep sigh, restraining myself from attacking them.

"Калі вам гэта не падабаецца, то чаму вы дбаеце? (If you don't like him then why do you care if he kissed someone else?)" Belarus asked me in a taunting voice, no doubt wearing her smug smile. I crossed my arms and slowly pivoted to face them again.

"Я же не, я просто- (I didn't, I just-)"

"істедің, бұған сен де ашуландың!(You did, you got all angry about it too!)" Kaz cut me off. "ол саған ұнайды оны өзіңізде мойындаңыз. (You like him, just admit it to yourself already.)"

"Здесь нечего признаватать для вас обоих! (There is nothing to admit to you two!)" I argued back, starting to get desperate. Bel rolled her eyes at me and shook her head once more.

"Вы калі-небудзь любілі дзяўчыну, Расія? (Russia, have you ever had a crush? On a girl?)"

For a moment, there was a sudden wave of remembrance that washed over me. I had heard those words before, but it felt like a long-forgotten dream and I felt suddenly like I was in a spotlight.

"Я заўважыў, (Cause as far as I noticed," Bel continued in her mothering voice stealing me from that quick strange moment, " вам не падабаецца ніхто, акрамя Амерыка. (you haven't ever batted an eye at someone until America came around.)"

I rubbed my neck and shoved my hand into my jean pocket. My

gaze was lowered to the floor and I couldn't bring myself to raise it. Belarus was smart, too smart in fact. She could easily sniff out the truth just as easily as I could. It was exhausting trying to hide things from her, especially when she could figure things out before you. She did learn it from me, after all.

"Ребят, я не знаю. Всё это настолько сбивает с толку. Я не знаю, что и думать об этом. (Guys, I don't know. Everything is so confusing. I don't know what to think.)"

They must have heard my change in tone cause they adjusted themselves from spitefully doubtful to comforting.

"онда ойланба. (Then don't think.)" Kaz wrapped his wing around me as a form of comfort and Bel patted my shoulder.

"Вы робіце гэта занадта шмат. Проста адчуваю. (You do too much of that, for once just feel."

"Hey, Bel!"

We looked up to see New Zealand standing by the doors, his two brothers no longer with him. For a moment I was disappointed I couldn't see America before he left.

My sister smiled widely however and waved to him. "Я да гэтага часу пабачымся. Арменія гатуе вячэру, добра? (I'll see you two later, alright? It's Armenia's turn to make supper, remind him for me, okay?)"

After her rather rushed reminder, she quickly ran off to join with New Zealand. At this point, it seemed like the only sibling of that family that hadn't been over a lot was Australia. Although America was over more often than any of them.

He was busy today, helping Scotland with some personal problems. He said he owed the country and couldn't hang out today. It disappointed me, I admit, but it did free up my afternoon to drink. Kaz was going to hang with his friends and brother today, and Armenia wouldn't bother me if I asked him not to. Ukraine was on

another date with Canada, and it's not like she would bother me anyway.

Normally, I'd walk with one of my siblings, even if it was only for a few minutes, but Kaz flew off and everyone was conveniently busy today. Being alone would be good for me anyway, I needed to think and clear my thoughts.

"Բարի օր, (Good afternoon,) " Armenia greeted me when I walked in. He was sitting on the couch, watching TV and I grunted as a response. He nodded and went back to his show, knowing to leave me alone. I would remind him to make supper, but first I have to drink.

I grab a bottle of vodka to take to my room so I can work on some papers while I slowly succumb to the alcohol.

Տխուր ես թվում, լավ ես? (You seem down, are you ok?) Armenia turned to me when he noticed me about to walk up the stairs. He looked down at my hand and noticed the drink. "Զգույշ կլինես չէ՞? (Are you going to be safe?)"

I nodded and walked up the stairs.

"Твоя очередь заниматься ужином.(It's your turn to make dinner.)"

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**Narrator's POV**

Russia was slumped over on the kitchen floor, his back against the cupboards. He held an empty bottle of vodka and would raise it to his mouth, only to realize he needed to get another one. Still, he never stood to get more. So he sat there in a loop of staring into space, raising his glass and becoming disappointed.

He was only broke free from his repetitive state once the bottle dropped from his hand. Still, it took him a moment to realize it. His mind was foggy and he was desperately trying to see through that
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fog. What was it? What was he trying to remember? Once he managed to push through his drunken blurred thoughts, he felt utterly defeated. There through that fog where his most recent persistent thoughts. It was like an image of America was standing further back, just right there beckoning him like a siren. He's been standing in that fog for months now, not wanting to go forward but feeling drawn to. It was as if there were whispering chains, grabbing his wrists and ankles, holding him in place, giving him reasons not to go.

"Он же парень, не правильно это.(He's a guy, it's not right.)"

"Америке нельзя доверять. (America can't be trusted.)"

"Ты будешь слишком заметен, тебе придется прятаться. (You'll be too exposed, you have to stay hidden.)"

"Найди уже себе женщину, вон там стоит оличный вариант специально для тебя. (Find a woman, the right one is out there for you.)"

"Сынок, я хочу, чтобы ты держался подальше от Америки. (Son, I want you to stay away from America.)"

And just like that, he would fall into hopelessness. A finale whisper, a finale chain that keeps him in place.

He remembered when his father told him that. He was still a young country, happy to see his father come home after his day at work. He was angry or looked angry, but he looked that way to everyone. Russia would see his father's face and know only the caring one under it.

Still, he knew enough to keep his distance when he was like this.

Soviet had looked exhausted, taking off his coat and boots. He spotted Russia and still no doubt angry from another encounter with America, told him to stay away from the country. He'll use him, turn him against his own father. He'll try to change him with his capitalist propaganda.

The idea of that scared young Russia.

At this time, Soviet didn't know how much Russia would take his words and orders to heart. Listening to them long after he had passed. Even his warnings against homosexuality were still there, and he still felt compelled to listen to them. Deep in his subconscious, even if he doesn’t realize it.

"Мужчины, которым нравятся другие мужчины, опасны. Они те еще манипуляторы, причиняют боль другим, лишь бы заполучить желаемое. Нападут и используют тебя. Будь осторожен, мой мальчик. (Men who like men are dangerous. They are manipulators, hurting people to get what they want. They'll attack you, and use you. Be cautious, boy.)"

Russia turned his head down to see the empty bottle on its side. He needed another one but couldn’t find the strength to get up. His limbs felt heavy, and he was barely keeping his head up. Maybe he could just lay there and think for a little while longer. He's been avoiding it all this time he might as well deal with it now.

He likes America.

More than a friend.

He's known this for a while, he's not stupid just in denial. But now was when he decided to sit down and deal with it. How could he deal with this anyway? He's never really had a crush before and knew very little about having one on a guy. All he's ever seen was straight relationships, so it's not like he could find a tutorial. Maybe he could ask someone.

Wait, he can't let this get out.

Russia? Liking a guy? No, it'll surely ruin his relations with other countries, especially the homophobic ones. He can't do this. But he doesn't want to hide from his feelings anymore. He shouldn’t have to, no matter what those other countries could say or do.

Being with America is confusing. He makes you feel like you are someone who deserves love, support, and friends, but as you step back and remember who you are. You realize your world is different. It isn't like how you want it to be. And right then Russia just wants answers.

He looked around the kitchen looking for someone to ask but frowned when he saw he was alone. His eyes swept the room a few more times before settling on the chair no one dared to touch.

"Пап, вот бы ты был здесь. (Dad, I wish you were here.)" He spoke aloud to the air, his words slurring. The silence that answered him made him curl into himself a little. "Ты смог бы мне все объяснить. Всё это черезчур трудно. (You could explain everything to me. It's too hard.)"

He tried to imagine his father sitting down next to him, dressed in more homey clothes with a drink in hand. He would smell of vodka, coal, and cigarettes, a smell Russia associated with home and his father. He could see him clearly in his mind, looking slightly amused but trying to hide it. He always had to explain probable common circumstance to him, and found joy in Russia's confused childlike innocence.

"Вот вырастишь, тогда все поймешь. (You'll understand when you're older,)" he'd say. Or maybe, "На бумажке то все просто, но на деле же все куда сложнее. А впрочем, это всегда так и со всем выходит. (It's simple on paper, but hard in action. Everything will be like that, though.)"

Him and his confusing fortune cookie words. He had to have gotten that vaugness from China. How did he ever understand his words? Was he smarter as a kid? Or just not drunk?

Russia tried to stand again and managed to lift himself up before he took one step and fell right back down. Tired, and ready to give up, he sprawled himself on the floor and tried to find that bottle he dropped. Once he had it, he curled himself around it and tried to pretend it was America. He always made falling asleep seem safe.

Oh, sleep. Sleep felt good.

"Не дрыхни тут, а ну вставай. (Don't sleep here, get up.)"

Too late. Body on autopilot.

With that last thought, Russia slipped into a drunken sleep.

When he woke, he had a headache and a dry throat. Used to both of those, he gave himself a moment to wake up and remember everything that had happened. School, home, room, vodka, food, more vodka, siblings sleep, more vodka, kitchen floor, even more vodka there. Did he fall asleep? Well, yeah he must have he just woke up.

As he moved to stand up off the kitchen floor he heard a creak of his mattress. He opened his eyes and saw that he wasn’t on the kitchen floor, rather he was on his bed in his room.

Confused, he looked around and noted that the covers around him were neat, evenly spread, almost like he had been tucked in. On his nightstand was his hat folded to sit complacently next to a glass of what looked like water. Oh, water would feel nice on his throat, so he without thought took the drink and slowly sipped on it. He must've blacked out some time and brought himself to his room. Normally though he isn't as careful or neat. Maybe one of his siblings helped him up and left him the water.

Blacking out wasn’t in question, though. He knew that once you start blacking out it gets progressively easier to. Maybe he should tone down the drinks for a while. The last thing he wants is to get blackout drunk around other people.

Namely America.

At that thought, Russia remembered. He needed to talk to Poland. He's the only country he could trust with this.

**((Look who's coming to terms with everything. Step one, admit**

**it. Step two, beg for help from your openly gay friend. Ahh, memories. I would list the other steps, but as River Song says, spoilers. And I will be semi-busy this week so the next chapter will either seem short or take longer to write I can't say for sure yet.**

**Credits to LorelySeal, jesuschristhelpmeplz, and starry-lady37 for helping me with the translations! I deeply appreciate them so give them love.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Bite Me (Smut)

**Ya'll dirty hoes asked me to so I shall provide. Again, don't read unless you want to.**

**Narrator's POV**

Poland was hungry.

And not in the horny way this time.

He and Germany where on a date to help keep Germany away from his troubling thoughts. He had been trying to remain happy, to stop worrying and trying to have fun with Poland. He thought a night out with some dinner would make him forget about his anxieties.

But alas, anxiety is a bitch. Excluding Virgil.

"Germany, what about here?"

The two stopped in front of a small café, run by Spain. There's was a few countries inside, just enough to keep the atmosphere calm.

"Look, Spain made some churros! I love those, let's get some!" Poland started pulling Germany towards the front door, Germany doing little to resist. Poland was thankful for that, since he decided he was going to pull Germany in whether he wanted to or not. He wanted food so he was going to get food.

Germany took a seat by the window while Poland went to go up and get them both their food. He chose the small table with the stool like chair to help Poland sit better with his wings. They bounced slightly when he walked, the feathers fluttering and sometimes dropping behind him. He never seemed to notice but was trying to be more self-aware of them again, accidentally hitting countries with them, sitting down and hurting himself, still a little unsteady with his flying. He was happy Poland had them back, it was an unexplainable miracle.

But that made him fearful.

He couldn't explain why.

Seeing Poland happy, giddy with his wings made him feel a bit better, but at the same time worried. Why had they grown back? Why now, of all times now? It had to have been something bad. It must've.

"Germany, you're doing it again."

Germany shook his head and looked across from him. Poland sat there with a look of concern, their churros in front of them.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to." Germany sat up and reached out for one of the sugary treats. As soon as he extended his hand out, Poland set his hand on top of his.

"Don't apologize, it's okay," he rubbed his thumb on his hand trying to comfort him. "Is there anything you want to tell me?"

Poland watched as Germany shook his head no, brushing it off to normal worries and him being self-conscious about his teeth. He had no reason to think otherwise, but the underlying feeling that Germany wasn't telling him something was there. There was little he could do he knew that, he just had to wait until Germany was comfortable telling him. And whenever that was he would be there for him.

After they ate and talked about whatever came to mind, they decided to take a car home. While Poland was on the phone with Czech to ask for a ride, Germany was looking around. They waited outside the café, so the sounds of countries in there talking along with chairs moving mixed with the natural sounds outside. It was the town, marketplace, trading posts, whichever country wanted to call it. Some shops were closed, some open for only one more hour or a few. Street lamps buzzed, with moths circling around them, sometimes fluttering away to land on the store windows that had lights on inside. One moth flew towards Germany, landing on the glass behind him. He smiled at it, about to look closer at its dull colored patterns but noticed a few countries inside looking up at

him.

He quickly covered his mouth and turned away.

"Okay, he said he'll be here in ten minutes." Poland put his phone away, looking towards Germany. He paused when he noticed his hand over his mouth, and reached out for his arm. "Germany, it's okay, you don't look scary."

Germany allowed him to lower his hand but couldn't help a side glance back inside the café. Poland noticed this so he grabbed Germany's jacket collar and pulled him down for a kiss. Forgetting about the strange looks from the others, he pulled Poland closer and just focused on him. He was all he needed.

When they pulled apart, Poland still held onto Germany's jacket so that their lips hovered over each other still.

"You are not scary, Germany. You are a nervous reck, though."

They both managed a small faint laugh, to Poland's delight. He liked hearing his partner laugh. It was carefree when he didn't have a worry but when he was you can hear the tension leave his voice. Bit my bit, it was quiet and loud all at the same time.

Still seeing that Poland hadn't let go of him, Germany cupped his face with his hands and kissed him gently, hesitating for a moment. He liked being gentle with him, caring, and careful. He had been treated so rough after all, it felt right.

Czech picked them up a few minutes later, the two of them getting in the backseat. Music was playing loudly in the car, Czech not bothering to turn it down cause he liked the song. He did nod to each of them as a silent acknowledgement but other than that didn't care too much then. He was tired and wanted sleep.

Poland leaned against Germany's chest and he wrapped his arm around his shoulders to hold him closer. He used to be able to simply read his head on his shoulder but with his wings now, he couldn't do that in the car's seats.

Forever tormented by troubling thoughts, as soon as Germany was

left with his own mind he began to worry. The tensions of his shoulders and sudden tightness of his fists made Poland look up to see what was wrong. He was looking out the window, watching the landscape as it moved past them. His face wore a frown, his eyebrows slanted in a worried expression.

A sudden idea popped in his head.

Poland slowly lifted is hand and started to rub Germany's thigh. Immediately he got a reaction, which was a surprised expression with a rapidly appearing blush.

Knowing he it was working, Poland looked ahead like he wasn't doing anything and focused on the partial view of the road he had. Czech was busy looking at the road and hadn't glanced in the rearview mirror at all, and from his view he would have to turn completely around to even see what Poland was doing.

Slowly Poland moved his hand higher and closer inwards. He felt Germany's chest start to rise much faster and could hear his quivering breath under the music.

"Poland, what if he sees us." Germany warned, but didn't do anything to stop him.

"He won't, " Poland extended his wing and shifted himself to make it look like he was hugging him while using his wing to do it too. When really, he was using it as a sheild of sorts.

With that covered, Poland traced his hand lightly over Germany's crotch then would squeeze the upper most part of his thighs. Teasing him slightly, he would move back and forth, but whenever he returned to his groin he pressed harder and stayed there longer.

"Pol, " Germany whined, trying to keep his composure and not arouse suspicion.

Feeling the slightest of a bulge, Poland unbotton his pants and unzipped them, slipping his hand in to further tease Germany.

"Poland, what are you-"

"Shhh, " Poland leaned up and kissed him. "You need to take your mind off of things."

Germany couldn't deny that he needed to. He had been so distracted lately, he and Poland hadn't actually had sex in a few weeks. Poland seemed unbothered by it, sticking to his random lewd jokes and teases just to get a reaction out of him. This was the first time he had made any sort of real move.

The feeling of his hand slowly tracing his length made him more and more aroused, and he could feel the blood rushing to the base of his cock.

suddenly Poland's hand left his pants and Germany opened his eyes to see why. They were driving up to their shared home and he jumped to zip and button his pants back up. Hopefully, since it was dark out his slight erection wouldn't be seen.

"I'm going to bed, don't be loud." Czech said as he left the car, not even waiting for them to get out of the backseat.

"I get to have you all to myself tonight, Germany~." Poland cooed pecking his lips once more before getting out of the car. Germany followed suit, quickly adding, "he could have seen us."

"But he didn't, " he responded in a sing-song voice. "And besides, I know it turned you on."

Germany held his hand over his crotch and blushed heavily. "That's not the point."

Poland chuckled and grabbed his hands to reveal the slight tent in his pants. "It is if that was my intention."

Hand in hand, the two went inside and went right to their bedroom. They had a small argument earlier about the window to Poland's room since he liked to leave it open at night cause it helps him sleep better. Germany saw it as a hazard and dangerous but then settled on having it open until he falls asleep then Germany can close it, just until they can come up with something better.

Now it seems however, Poland wont object to it being closed with

the curtains drawn. In fact, he was the one who went over and closed them himself. When he turned around he was startled by how close Germany was, but had little time to react before he was picked up for a kiss.

Not knowing where this move came from, Poland followed suit and wrapped his legs around Germany's waist and grinning into the kiss when he felt his hands squeeze his ass. For once, Germany was seemingly for forward than usual. His trick in the car seemed to work more than he thought.

Germany set him on the bed, examining the pole in front of him. He was dressed a little more neat, having been a date night, with a button down shirt under a simple yellow vest. He helped Poland take off the vest, which was modified in the back to button around his wings for easy put on and take off. Same with his shirt and the majority of his clothes, which all had to be changed after he regrew his wings.

Once his shirt was off and Germany's was too, he thought about Poland's wings again. He couldn't lay him down on his back, it'd hurt him. Maybe if he was on his lap or laying on his stomach.

"You want me to tie you up again, Germany,~" Poland teased leaning up and tracing his finger under his chin.

"Actually," he picked Poland up and sat down on the bed's edge, setting him down on his lap. "I was thinking of something a little different tonight."

Poland gasped and let out a moan when he felt Germany bite his neck, pressing just right on the skin for it to build pressure but not break the skin. Fuck he liked it when Germany bit him like that. But usually, he would have to be coaxed into doing this, and here he was doing it all on his own. His hands held a tight grip on his thighs, spreading his legs and holding them in place.

"Oh God, yes," Poland wrapped his hands around Germany's head to hold him in his place, twisting his fingers in his hair. He was okay with being a bottom tonight and would love the idea of him having bite marks and hickeys the next morning.

Receiving consent and no signs of him protesting the idea, Germany moved his hands further up Poland's legs and started to undo his pants. He pulled them down, grabbing the waistband of his underwear too, and exposed Poland's quickly hardening dick.

He started playing with it, stroking it and rubbing his thumb over the tip. He felt Poland shudder, his breathing hitching whenever he moved his hand just the right way or when he nibbled at his collar bone.

"Germany~" Poland quietly moaned, his hips moving with Germany's hand. His grip on his shoulders got tighter, trying to steady himself and keep some sort of focus alive.

Once he felt a bit of precum leak onto his hand, he slowed his hand down and gently stroked Poland's member, before stopping entirely.

"Lay down on your stomach," Germany instructed him. He got up and allowed him to stand, before crawling onto the bed and doing as told. Germany went over to the mini cabinet they had by the bed and opened the bottom drawer grabbing their bottle of lube and leaving the other things in their alone.

Poland had taken off his pants, leaving himself fully exposed and impatiently waiting for Germany's touch. He watched him walk behind him, climbing onto the bed with him and coating a finger in lube. Taking a deep breath, he tried to relax as much as he could so that Germany wouldn't have to tell him to and so he wouldn't be worried about hurting him.

He still shivered when he felt his fingers graze over his hole, a single digit twirling around. Slowly and carefully, Germany pushed his finger in and watched Poland for a response. He notices him grimace slightly before his expression became more relaxed, allowing Germany to start pumping his finger in and out. Soon he adds a second finger and works on stretching him more, scissoring them.

A fairly loud moan escapes Poland's mouth, him turning his head to face forward and bury his face in his pillow. Germany brushed his fingers against that spot of nerves again, curling his fingers and

thrusting them in and out. His work is rewarded by more muffled moans and the fluttering and shaking of Poland's wings.

Once he was deemed prepared enough, Germany pulled out his fingers and pulled down his boxers. He watched Poland trying to catch his breath grabbed his own member. He was already hard, so there was no worry on his part. He poured some lube onto his hand and set the bottle down on the bed a little ways from them then proceeded to coat his length in the liquid.

"You ready?" Germany asked, grabbing Poland's hips and lining himself up with his asshole.

A small noise of confirmation was what he got.

With that, Germany thrusted forward and pulled Poland towards him to connect their hips. A loud gasp and cry escaped Poland's mouth, him holding onto his pillow tighter. Tears dotted the corner of his eyes but the small moment of pain quickly disappeared. He felt Germany lean over him and kiss the side of his face, his light touch of his hand rubbing his back to try and relax his muscles. The weight of his wings subside when they lowered onto the bed, the feather's grazing Germany's arms.

"You okay?"

"Mhm," he tried to turn his head to look at him the best he could. "You can move."

Germany started out slow, allowing Poland to get used to it all while he gently kissed down his neck. He was careful, gentle, and soft. It was welcoming, a change from Poland's usual rough motions.

"Bite me," Poland moaned lowly. "Please~."

Still somewhat submissive, Germany did as told, sinking his teeth into his shoulder and the crook of his neck. He started to speed his thrusts up, trying to aim for the nerves he hit earlier. Poland had always struck him perfectly, having him see stars and moan out into night. He wanted to make Poland feel that way, hearing him

become a moaning mess, being submissive for one night. He felt him under him, shivering at each touch, letting out a moan into the pillow in an effort be quiet.

"Faster, Germany, please, faster," Poland cried, his wings flaring up a bit. The feathers rubbed against his sides, causing Germany to laugh a little and pause.

"Your wings," he laughed.

Poland noticed and lowered his wings, shyly smiling. "Sorry, I didn't notice."

"It's okay, they just tickled," Germany sat up and grabbed ahold of his hips to continue. Poland wanted him to go faster, so he did as told and focused on that.

With the sudden quick pace after a small moment of calm, Poland couldn't stop the loud cry that left his mouth. He buried his face into the pillow again, desperately grabbing and pulling at the fabric. The bed rocked with each thrust, Poland's muffled sounds matching the thumps. He felt Germany sliding in and out of him, each time going in further and hitting harder.

Suddenly, he hit something inside of him making him moan louder and clench his muscles around the German tighter. He felt close to cumming, the pressure building up inside him rapidly each time Germany hit his prostate. He wanted to yell, tell him to hit there harder and faster but he couldn't form any words.

"Poland," Germany lowly moaned, leaning over him to try and pick up more speed. He felt close to releasing but knew he had to make sure Poland came first. He held his focus, shutting his eyes tightly and listened to the rapid sounds of Poland's moans barely muffled by the pillow. He could hear him trying to form words but they wouldn't come out.

With a finale cry, Poland came over himself and the bed. Germany wasn't too far behind, and with a few final thrusts he came inside him.

His body weak and tired, Poland didn’t have any strength in him to lift himself up and only focused on catching his breath. Germany slowly pulled out, his cum running down Poland's ass and leg. Knowing he was what was holding him up on their bed, he kept his grip on him so he wouldn’t fall right onto the cum stained sheets. He'd have to change them before they slept, he could do it while Poland washed up.

"You okay?" Germany asked, setting his hand on his shoulder.

"I'm absolutely okay." He turned his head and took in a few more deep breaths. "If you can do this to me again sometime, that will be amazing."

Germany laughed and tried not to blush too hard. His whole body felt warm and the thought of a cold shower would be nice.

"Come on, I have to clean the bed." Germany grabbed him up by his underarms and help him off the bed. "You want to take a shower?"

"you have to help me wash my wings, remember?" Poland said standing up on his own two feet. His legs felt weaker and he knew he needed a moment to regain his strength. Germany noticed, and helped him stand.

"I know. I'll be there in a second, I have to change our sheets."

While Poland started the shower, Germany cleaned the bed and took care of their dirty clothes. He put everything back where it belonged and neatly made their bed and organized their pillows for them, and went to open the window. The cooler air would feel good right then.

After he knew everything was situated, he went to the bathroom to clean himself off and help Poland wash up as well. Their house fell quiet, the only sounds the water running and their quiet voices talking.

Meanwhile, in his room Czech was happily asleep with his headphones in.

**((I have nothing to say for myself. Except I did everything I**

**could to make sure Germany didn’t say Poland please. Ya'll know why.))**

**Still thinking of not adding in the accents for smuts. Just cause you know. Should I or should I not?**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Mirrored Problems

**Narrator's POV**

It was a warm day, a bright blue sky with faint clouds painting the open canvas. Perfect weather for summer events, relaxing in the sun, or even enjoying the atmosphere. Instead, Russia was pacing around the path that lead to the entrance of the park. He held his hand behind his back and his thumbnail in his mouth, which he nervously chewed on. Whenever he was this nervous, he'd used to pull out a cigarette and the nicotine would calm him down, but he had promised Bel he would stop.

The slightest urge was there and he was focusing more on it to help distract him from his persistent thoughts. It wasn't helping him addiction wise, but he'd prefer that.

His phone buzzed in his jean pocket and he quickly took it out. It was a text from Poland telling him that he was on his way.

Of course, the first person Russia would think to text or even seek help for with this certain. . .topic was Poland. It seemed right, fitting almost, Poland had come to him for help with Germany. Russia just never suspected he'd be on this side of the script.

While Russia was too worried to notice how nice the day was, Poland was trying to feel it all as he felt the rush of wind through his feathers. The warm sun rays that hit him, the air that smelled freeing and fresh, the faint sounds of other birds. He missed the days he could fly around and not have a care in the world. He couldn't imagine he'd get the chance to do this again, to feel the same sensations he felt before.

Now if only he could remember how he could use his healing.

It was something he used to do a lot. Back when having wings was a little more common, a little safer. He could heal wounds, depending on his own health, he could heal fatal or small wounds.

Even more, he could help fix and heal another country's wings. Especially the younger countries that had them. Kids are accident prone, they would frequently injure themselves. Poland would heal them, help them mend bones, grow back feathers, even entire parts of wings, things that could take months to fix done in a span of a few days. Once he managed to help a country grow back an entire wing.

Once he lost those, he lost the ability to help them. He noticed countries start to hide them more, they stopped flying, he even heard rumors of countries cutting off their own wings so they couldn't be used against them as Poland's had. He couldn't blame them, they were just scared. He was a walking reminder that the cruelest of countries could be hiding in plain sight and are willing to ruin whatever they want.

Now he was hoping he'd switch that around. That even after what had happened, he can grow past it and be stronger. Wings and all. Maybe now countries can feel safe and start to spread their own wings.

But all of that will have to unfold on its own. Right now, he had a closeted Russian to deal with. And by the urgency of his texts, he was hoping that Russia hadn't done anything bad.

Poland spotted Russia by the gated entrance of the park, pacing back and forth. He looked more nervous than angry, so that calmed down Poland's worries slightly. He can try and land next to him, he does need to practice his drop landing a little more.

Hearing fluttering of wings, larger than the birds he had previously been hearing, Russia looked up to see Poland diving down from the sky at him. He breathed out a sigh of relief and finally stopped pacing and stood still to wait for him to land.

He was descending pretty fast.

A little too fast.

Shit.

“Too low, too low!” Poland shouted in fear as he noticed he was about to crash land with Russia right in his path. Russia noticed it too and started to run out of the way, but he had realized too late and was knocked to the grass by Poland. The two rolled for a second, Poland sliding the furthest and ending up with his legs suspended in the air leaning against a tree while Russia was a few feet behind him lying on his stomach.

“That didn’t go according to plan,” Poland mumbled and he craned his neck to look at Russia. He saw him slowly start to get up, looking around for his ushanka to cover his white fluffy hair. “You okay?”

“I’m fine,” Russia answered, sitting up to the adjust himself and put back on his hat.

“Good. Cause that was fun!”

Russia raised a brow at Poland, watching him practically bounce right up onto his feet. “Did you see me come swooping in, then boom, crash! For a moment I couldn’t tell I was upside down!”

“I did see, in fact, zat’s why I rrran,” Russia rolled his eyes at the excitement of crash landing. It wasn’t the first time something like that has happened to him, and he doubts it’ll be the last. Poland was still laughing about it, the adrenaline of the rather rough landing cursing through him. Seeing that Russia suggested that they walk instead of sitting down somewhere so that Poland can get that energy out of him in some way.

“So, what did you want to talk to me about?” Poland quickly cut to the chase, having a slight feeling of what it could be just based on his nervousness. He knew it could have something to do with his siblings, or something else bothering him, but he chose to believe it has something to do with America.

Judging by Russia’s surprised eyes and slight blush it was probably America.

“I,” Russia hesitated and rubbed the back of his neck, slipping it under his ushanka and feeling the fur under it. “It’s harrrd forrr me

to say.”

Poland, knowing how hard it must have been for him to say this to someone else, even if it was him, set his hand on his arm. “It’s okay, whatever it is, I promise you I won't judge you for it. Unless you say you murdered a bunch of baby animals, I will never forgive you for that.”

They both chuckled at Poland’s joke, the tension of it fading away. Russia felt a little more confident, so before his anxieties got him he tried to say it again.

"I zink, I” he sighed again as the words were caught in his throat and he chewed his lip. Huffing out from annoyance, he shoved his hands in his pockets and lowered his head. "I zink I like Amerrrica."

"Think or know?"

Russia sighed in defeat. "Know."

Poland smiled up at him and patted his back, trying to refrain from laughing. “It’s okay, that’s not a bad thing.”

“Yeah, vell it doesn’t feel like good zing,” Russia muttered sourly, not feeling that proud or that relieved that he told Poland as he expected to. Instead of it feeling less extreme and vivid, it made it feel all the more real.

“Why not?”

“Kause it’s Amerrrica. Of all kountrrries, I like Amerrrica.”

Poland laughed, interpreting his discomfort as less to do with liking a guy and more of him likening America. He was an outlandish country, everyone knew that. And Russia’s close friend.

“Well, do you want my advice?”

“Da.”

“I think you should ask him out.”

Russia stumbled over the air at the thought, his face flushing red. “I-I can’t do zat.”

“Not with that attitude you can’t.” Poland stopped walking and set his hands on his hips. “How about just ask him out on a date? It’s like hanging out, but more romantic.”

The idea steadied Russia’s worries slightly but he stilled rubbed his neck nervously. Going on a date seemed small enough, like just dipping your toes into the water instead of being pushed right in. Going slow might be perfect for him right now, he doesn’t want to mess anything up.

“Okay, a date. A date sounds…nice.”

“See, you can do this, it’s simple. You just have to tell America it’s a date and he’ll-“

“I don’t zink I kan tell him outrrright,” Russia interrupted Poland, looking around nervously. He felt like he was being watched and for a moment he was worried that America was close and could hear him talking about this out loud. “Not yet anyway. Maybe I kan tell him after? Orrr when I find rright moment I kan.”

Poland sighed, seeing Russia’s obvious attempts at procrastination. How could someone who can look into the black void of death and make the void look away first be so nervous about something as simple as a date? Well, the same way someone can throat punch a racist but be scared to order food, anxiety is weird.

“Well, how do you see a date between you going?”

Russia thought about that and started walking forward once more, Poland hurrying to keep with his long strides. Damn tall people.

“I kan invite him over forrr dinner again, so it’s not too out of my komforrrt zone.” He looked down at Poland for variation. He saw him smile and nod so he continued, “and after zat, maybe ve kan play video games orrr, orrr vatch movie and zen. Zen…”

Russia didn’t know what then.

Poland sighed, realizing Russia really does have the romantic abilities of a spoon. What he suggested sounded more like a regular hang out, not a date. He had something with the dinner idea, though.

“Not that you don’t have a clue about what you're talking about,” Poland patted Russia’s arm, “but maybe we should leave the ideas up to me.”

Seeing that would most likely be the best choice, Russia agreed. ”What should I do?”

Giving someone full creative control, especially some who works with Japan, may not have been a smart choice but that was all Russia had. And he knew that even though Japan may be eccentric, Poland could be a lot more realistic.

“You had a good idea with the dinner, but maybe make it so it would be just you and him.”

Russia nodded along, seeing that it wouldn’t be too outrightly suggestive, they had eaten together at a few places, by themselves and with family or friends. There was no reason to worry then.

“After dinner, maybe go to see a movie at the theater and let America pick.”

“Mmm.” Russia frowned at that. It was too public. He didn’t want to be seen on any kind of date with America, not publicly at least. Not yet, he wasn’t comfortable.

“Ve kan vatch movie at my house.”

“Alright, but make it a romantic one. Or a horror one! Classic date material. And it's not too extra.”

Seeing Russia was okay with that, Poland suggested a few other things. If a horror movie, wrap your arm around him if he gets scared. If it’s a romance movie, kiss him at a heated moment.

Russia was going with a horror movie.

Poland tried to insist that he can't hide behind things forever, but Russia only muttered back that he will surely try.

“Russia, you can do something as simple as kissing him.”

“How about I just put my arrrm arrround him?”

“No.”

“Hold his hand maybe?”

“Russia.”

“Fine, I guess.” Russia let out a nervous shaky breath. “I kan trrry.”

“Good boy.”

He froze in place when he felt Poland pat his head. He looked over to see him lowering himself back on the ground and the smug little smile on his face.

“Im not dog.”

“I know, but your expression was hilarious.”

Russia rolled his eyes, remembering how America does his own eccentric things just to get a reaction out of him. He never would admit it out loud, much less to himself, but he did like it when America would do those things. Then it almost felt wrong, like he was breaking orders.

Maybe that’s why he was so nervous. He’s going against everything he was ever taught. Everything he’s seen before in his life, it didn’t help him now. He didn’t grow up accepting of everything and everyone, all he had ever seen and watched as a kid was against this. He didn’t know how a relationship with America could go, and not knowing bothered him. He knew how straight relationships would go, how they would end if they needed to. He’s seen those countless times. He’s never seen homosexual ones until very recently.

It was all so new so fast and Russia could barely keep up. He’s

hardly had time to fully deal with the fact that he likes a guy.

It’s okay, though. That’s what he tells himself at least.

He’s faced worse things. But then again, this was America. So far, he’s thrown every curveball between them.

**((Whoooo! Fast update what is this huh? It's almost like I just did a filler chapter. Don't worry there might not be a lot of those for a long time since shits going down. Except one that me and Mystery are gonna be working on.))**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Fair Fun

**Warning. No it isn't a smut warning, but it's a warning. If it helps you know why there is a warning, me and Mystery made this.**

**Narrator's POV**

"Meri, what makes you think this is a good idea?" Ella groaned as the peppy American dragged her towards the giant brick wall of the edge of their universe.

"Hey. I let you make my boyfriend date Slovakia - you owe me."

Ella grumbled to herself, figuring that was fair. It was a pretty shitty move on her part. But she didn't exactly want to do this under Morning's radar - as America requested. But what choice did she have really?

When they reached the wall, Ella destroyed it as usual and Meri lead her over to Morning's wall, stopping Ella just before she went to break it.

"Ok, here's the plan: I go in there, grab Ame, and once we bring him back here, we bring his memory back."

Ella looked at him unimpressed, "Uhm, no. IM going in there. YOU stay here."

Meri pouted, "What? Why?"

"You don't even know where he is."

"...Fair point. Counterpoint: I'm his best friend."

"Meri, you met him ONCE."

"You say that like its a bad thing."

"Look- just-" Ella took a deep breath in. "Hang tight. I'll be back."

With that, the door came crumbling down and she disappeared in a cloud of dust. Meri grumbled and crossed his arms, sitting on a chair near the wall.

Ame was lying in bed, scrolling through his phone trying to fight sleep. He was looking at memes, laughing to himself in the dark if the room.

As far as he knew, everyone was asleep. He should be too, he had made plans with Russia for tomorrow.

Still, as much as he tried, sleep still overtook him and in five minutes he was asleep with his phone in hand.

Ella cursed under her breath as she climbed through Ame's window. How the hell did she keep getting herself into these ridiculous situations? 5 years ago she was setting up a skeleton and a genderless kid like a weirdo and now she was climbing into a country's bedroom through their window.

As soon as she saw Ame she slid an arm under his neck and the other under his knees. She knew he was a heavy sleeper so she didn't worry about waking him up. She lifted him up with a little difficulty, carrying him back out the window and towards the wall.

"I'm boned, I'm boned, I'm so fucking boned."

Once she made it through the wall rematerialized, Meri looking up expectantly with grin.

"You did it!"

Ella groaned and laid Ame down on the couch, taking a vace from nearby and taking the flowers out, dumping the water on his face.

Like a true American, he slowly sat up and looked around saying, "Hello?"

Noticing the water he wiped his eyes free from it and spat it out looking around, noticing the two people.

"Uh. Is this heaven?"

Meri giggled, "Hear that El? I'm an angel~"

He batted his eyelashes at her and she chuckled, pushing away his face.

"Calm down weirdo. We need to give him back his memories."

"My memories?" Ame turned to them and raised a brow. "Oh shit, is this the stuff from the time I died? Are you a past version of me?"

"Oh absolutely. I'm a super cool, amazing, perfect-"

"Egotistical," Ella mumbled.

"-version of you that died in a super cool explosion."

Ella rolled her eyes and chuckled, deciding to wait and see Ame's reaction to that "news" before she let him remember his other-self.

"'Ight, makes sense." Ame stood and looked around, seeing the long continuous hallway that felt like a therapist waiting room. "Is this heaven? Wait, shit? Am I actually dead? Like for real dead dead?"

That's when the reality of what he thought was happening hit him.

"Oh shit, no- you're not- just-" Ella sighed and reached up, gently taking the sides of America's forehead and applying a slight bit of pressure.

The girl closed her eyes tight, sorting through Ame's memories to try and find the ones Morning had buried. After a bit more searching, there - in a tiny pocket of Ame's subconscious - was a hazy memory of the last time he had been in that very corridor. With a deal of effort, she pulled the memory out of its hiding place and back to the front of his mind.

Ame cried out and held his head tightly. A rush of memories hit him, from a fuzzy image of Japan all the way to the moment where they had left. Everything came in the span of a few seconds.

He fell to his knees, heavily breathing trying to regain his surroundings.

"I knew those weren't his jeans."

Ella chuckled and stepped back, Meri pushing past her slightly.

Meri knelt down beside him, taking his face in his hands, squishing his cheeks up slightly to make him look chubby.

"Y'all good?"

"Oh my God Meri!" Ame jumped at him, wrapping his arms around him in a tight hug. "Holy shit I can't believe it, I remember you!"

Meri laughed happily, hugging him back just as tightly and tucking his face into his neck. Until he pulled away suddenly and lightly flicked him in the forehead.

"I can't believe you forgot me, mister!"

"It wasn't my fault!" Ame protested rubbing his forehead. "I'm pretty sure I was going against God, I don't think I have any way out of what they wanted."

Meri began tearing up slightly, letting the tension that had built up over the past month or two finally weigh him down enough to put a crack in his defenses. He pulled Ame into another hug and closed his eyes tight, leaning into his figure.

"I really missed you. I was worried I would never see you again."

"God I missed you too, " Ame then quickly added, "I mean I would if I remembered you but I'm happy I do now!

"Oh, God I have so much to tell you! You won't believe it, I swear everything has been going crazy, " Ame held Meri out at arm's length, happy to have someone who knew almost exactly what it was like to be him. He even helped him finally get Russia to admit his feelings- OH MY GOD RUSSIA ALMOST FUCKED HIM. Damn it he was definitely bottom!

Meri put a finger over his mouth with a grin, knowing all too well that if he started talking he would never stop.

"Hold that thought. Ella? Will you do the honors?"

Ella grumbled under her breath and walked to a lever on a pillar nearby that was unnoticeable if one didn't look too hard. She pulled it down and suddenly whirrs and clicking of gears and machinery stirred to life beneath their feet. The tiles below them began to shake and ahead of them some were slinking below and clicking into place one after the other, creating a stair-like effect. Meri pulled Ame towards him to stop him from tumbling down the stairs that were suddenly being carved out of the tiled floor.

Once the gears stopped turning and the last tiles clicked into place, a bright white light began to glow between what now looked like a frame of tiles. The light bubbled and rippled like water between the tiles, creating a pleasant humming sound that reverberated off the walls.

Meri did little jazz hands, "Ta-daaaa!"

"Whoa!" Ame gasped walking closer to perceived magic stairs. "Dude, what is this? Is this like a portal?"

A little worried, he backed away slightly sticking beside Meri.

"It's not LIKE a portal - it is a portal!" Meri starts walking down the steps, taking Ame's hand to make him follow. "Don't worry, it's completely safe - I've been through it before with Russia."

Once they had reached the bottom of the stairs Meri turned to him with a smile, "It just takes you where you want to go. I thought it would be fun to have a night out on the town than just mope around in here."

"That sounds great! Where we going? Shopping or trying out those cool new video games?" Ame asked, looking up the steps they had just descended. A sudden idea popped in his head and he quickly turned back to Meri. "Oh, what if we went to a fair! Like, like an amusement park!"

"That's exactly what I was thinking! I have the perfect one too!"

Meri started pulling him towards the portal. When his back touched the light it made a soft sound that kinda sounded like someone turning on a lightsaber.

"Ella don't wait up!"

Ella, however, had already begun walking away, keeping the lever down for them.

"I won't!"

"Wait, is there humans there? I don't have your kind of disguise," Ame warned Meri worried about how normal people would react. Based on the movies he's seen, the masses don't take kindly to someone who looks different.

"Bro I'm already halfway through the portal, it's fine. If I knew it was dangerous I wouldn't bring you would I?" He poked his tongue out at him. "Besides - the world is whatever you want, remember? We want people to not give a shit and they won't!"

"Alright, I trust you, " Ame chuckled and let himself be lead through the portal. A little nervous, he had shut his eyes and waited for something to go wrong. Nothing did, thankfully. When he did pass through it he immediately felt the change in atmosphere.

Meri giggled, elbowing him, "You wanna open your eyes or you just gonna be blind the whole day?"

Ame kept his eyes closed and waved his hands around, grabbing out in the air.

"What, who was that?" He joked, grabbing Meri's face and squishing his cheeks. "Who goes there!"

Meri laughed and made his voice deeper and added a British accent, "America, I am your father."

"Gasp! Father, you sound like me!" He opened his eyes and did a surprised face, holding his cheeks mimicking the home alone kid.

"Oh no, I am my fatheeeeeeeer!"

He fell to his knees, hitting the ground in a final motion of defeat. Not being able to stand himself, he started laughing and stood up.

Meri pulled him under his arm and rubbed his knuckles into his head, "Stop drawing attention to us you little shit!"

"Aww, but I like attention, " Ame laughed, pushing Meri away to get out of his noogie. "Besides, I'm funny."

"Not as funny as me though," Meri joked.

"Aren't we like the same? Just from different universes though?" Ame asked, looking around to try and find something interesting or fun to do.

"Well, yea but doesn't that make you feel less special or unique?"

Meri started walking towards a large door. The portal had spat them out in a storage room for a roller coaster, so they could be heard but not seen. He opened the door to a giant medieval-looking hall, with a seemingly never-ending line for a roller coaster that looked to be about scooby doo and his gang.

"Welcome to Jurassic Park!" Meri jokes, raising up his arms and getting a few confused stares.

"Last I checked there was no mystery gang in Jurassic Park, " Ame pointed out. "And about that feeling less special, maybe? I mean. It's not like we are the same-same anyway, we got different lives right?"

Meri started walking out of the building to have a better look at the whole amusement park.

"We do, but when people see us they probably think we think the same and act the same and yadda yadda. But we're not. For example: I'm a hilarious work of art and you're a gay with bad memory."

"Firstly, you are right, " Ame hurried after Meri. "Secondly, that doesn't give you the right to call me out like that."

It was a joke since he did know he had a bad memory. But that was normal for him, he can't even remember a time where he had a good memory.

See, there he was again.

Meri giggled and stood still putting his hands on his hips. Near them were multiple roller coasters and rides, as well as games and food stalls. Just as Meri said, no one was looking at them weird because they were countries.

"So where do you wanna go first?"

"Definitely a roller coaster, I wanna scream my head off, " Ame grabbed Meri's hand, leaving him no choice but to follow him to the nearest one.

Laughing, Meri followed him to an extremely tall roller coaster that had loops and other upside-down parts.

"Hey, wanna know a secret?~" Meri whispered when they arrived at the back of the line.

"Oh definitely!" Ame whispered back, excited to hear it without even knowing what it could have been about.

Meri reached into his pocket and pulled out two little pink slips, handing one to Ame.

"Y'know how I said the portal takes you anywhere you want? Well, it also GIVES you anything you want. So I got us fast passes so we can get out of literally hour long lines."

"Oh, that's so fucking cool!" America gasped, looking down at his pass. "The hell are we doing here then? Let's go!"

He grabbed Mari's arm and started to move their way to the front of the line.

Meri snickered, "We're such assholes--"

He skipped up to the front of the line with him, the man operating

the ride nodding to them and opening the gate once the last passengers left. Meri jumped up and down excitedly, chambering into one of the coaster cars.

"Smart assholes, you know the worst kind." Ame winked at his alternate version, lifting up his sunglasses to do so. He couldn't wait till the ride started and hang out with him more, since they vibed so well almost immediately.

"Hey. My dude," Meri reached over and lifted Ame's sunglasses off his face, tucking them into his pocket. He took his own off his face and winked at him. "We don't need these today. None of these people are gonna judge us."

A little panicked, Ame looked around at everyone and seen that they didn't seem to notice or even care that they both had black eyes.

"Huh, no kidding." Ame rubbed under his eye, only used to Russia taking off his glasses and seeing them. It felt kind of. Freeing.

"Nice right?" Meri laughed, sitting back in his seat as the operator brought down the metal seatbelt thing. "It's so good to just not CARE sometimes."

"Guess I have been doing too much of that lately." Ame rubbed the back of his neck after the metal bar was brought down. "Ya' know life's problems being a bitch like always."

Meri smiled as the ride flurried to life. He put one arm around his shoulders and used the other to pull him into a hug.

"Well, we don't have to worry about our bullshit anymore. At least not right now."

He pulled away with a smile as their cart began climbing up a large incline and patted his shoulder.

"Yeah youre right, " Ame shuffled in his seat and got ready for the drop. He tapped his feet on the metal cart and buzzed with excitement. "Fuck everything and have fun, right?"

"Ok maybe not fuck everything, I have a boyfriend," Meri giggled, leaning on the bar. "How's the Russia thing working out for you by the way?"

"Not so well. I don't understand, he was able to quickly get to it when we were in that hall, but now that it's been a while he hasn't done much of anything." Ame leaned against the bar and shuffled his feet instead of tapping them. "But we are supposed to be hanging out tomorrow so maybe something's happening then?"

Meri grinned, putting his hands behind his head while they reached the top of the tracks.

"Don't worry, you can seduce him. I believe in you."

"Sure hope so, " Ame raised his arms above his head, ready for the drop. The coaster seemed to slow down it's decent right as it neared the tipping point. Then just like that, zoom! The carts zoomed down the track, the free-falling feeling hitting their stomachs, the wind rushing past their faces, and making Ame happy he could take off his glasses. They would have flung off his face for sure.

Meri screamed in delight and held onto the bar, throwing his head back to avoid his cheeks filling up with air. The cart was thrown into a quick loop before flinging them off again. They kept accelerating more and more, people behind them screaming crazily before they came to a sudden stop while upside down.

Meri turned to Ame, his hair standing up since they were chilling in midair.

"So who do you think will top then? I know you didn't seem to be topping before but if you seduce him and like catch him off guard, do you think you could do it?"

"Oh definitely, I'll make that big Russian be submissive, I got this, " Ame laughed, completely confident about it, but not bringing to the attention of how much he didn't hate being a bottom. Still, he had his dignity to uphold.

"Wait, are we supposed to be upside down like this?"

Meri shrugged, relaxing into his seat.

"Who knows. But if you're worried I'm sure it's fi--"

Before he could finish that sentence they shot off again towards another loop, people behind them screaming at the top of their lungs as Meri laughed.

Ame screamed but that turned into joyous laughter and he held onto the bar in front of him for dear life.

All too soon the ride was over and Meri and Ame got off, Meri stumbling around like a drunkard and giggling to himself.

"Ok," Meri said after getting over the majority of his giggling. "Where to next?"

"Something that won't leave us upside down for a good few seconds, " Ame joked as he tried to fix his hair. "That messed with my head."

As he combed his hair with his fingers, he looked around trying to find another ride. Or maybe even some food. Funny how he was going to sleep just before this but now feels no exhaustion what so ever.

"Oh no, we can't have that!" Meri joked. "But you fucked it up, let me fix it."

He combed through the hair and patted it down, making sure to swoop it off to the side to keep it out of his eyes. One piece of hair decided to be an asshole though and kept popping up so he licked his finger and slicked it down.

"Jesus your hair is the worst, Im sorry for nooging you earlier--"

Ame smiled and let Meri struggle with his bitch of a hair. "It's alright, it gets all messed up on its own anyway."

It was funny seeing Meri look frustrated with something he would have just brushed aside for the moment.

"But it needs to be perfect!" Meri whined, giving up and groaning,

walking away. "Now that's gonna annoy me all goddamn day."

Ame laughed and punched his shoulder lightly, "don't sweat it, my guy. It's bound to get all messy anyhow, cause that for sure wasn't the last roller coaster we're going on."

Ame looked around as they walked trying to spot another ride. "Hey, since I dragged you onto that one you wanna pick the next ride?"

Meri grins, "Hell yea! I have the perfect one, too!"

He takes his hand and drags him over to a small space holding a platform and a tall ass tower thing. The people who were on it were screaming and spinning around and around on the tower, but still staying upright.

"This one's my favorite!"

"Oh, that looks like so much fun! And like I'll throw up afterwards let's do it!" Ame jumped excitedly, pulling out his fast pass for when the ride stops. "We only have these fair things like once a year where im from, and it's so much fun."

"I know right?? I feel so important like 'get out of my way peasants I got a seat with my name on it!'"

They were let on the ride for the bottom seats, two front-facing and two directly behind facing the other direction.

"Do you want to sit together or no?" Meri asked, sitting in the seat on the edge because he wanted more of a rush.

"Uh, duh. Whether you like it or not, you're stuck with me today, " Ame said and he sat down next to Meri. "Like two peas in a pod. Or countries from another universe. Man, that is still so weird. Like."

He made a motion from his head like an explosion, matched with the hand gestures for it.

Meri giggled, "Oh yea, it's hella weird. You don't even know the weirdest part of it. Like if I told you ALL of it, then you'd REALLY

be like."

He did the same motion just as the roller coaster slowly lifted them up to let people get on the other side of it.

"I don't think I can handle more actually, im still trying to re-process everything." Ame laughed at himself and shook his head. "My God, im sitting in another dimension im guessing, with another version of me at a fair. I've seen it all ladies and gentlemen!"

Meri laughed and cupped his hands over his mouth to yell down to the people below.

"YA HEAR THAT PEOPLE? HE'S SEEN IT ALL! NO MORE SURPRISES THANK YOU! NO ONE TELL HIM HE'S IN A VIDEO GAME!"

"Shut up, you're gonna bring attention to us!" Ame laughed before realizing what he said. "Wait, in a what?"

"Nothing, nothing," Meri looked away with a big grin, looking over the scenery.

"I never got around to asking where you came from. Like, I guess what reality. We were too focused on messing with the Russia's." Ame laughed, remembering when they both switched clothes. Meri had colored patterns on his stomach, which Ame found amazing. He just had plain white skin, other than a few scars, nothing made him too interesting.

Meri bit his lip as they hung in the air. He really couldn't tell him that he came from a universe where everything was planned out by an annoying teenager.

"Oh, yknow normal stuff. Like. Um. Coffee shops and houses and blah blah blah. Oh! I'm in university which is cool! I'm studying engineering so I can be an astronaut, and so is Russie."

"An astronaut really? That sounds amazing, I've never been to space before." Ame admitted a little upset. He looked up at the big blue sky, trying to imagine it just being a vast abyss with thousands of stars surrounding him. He wasn't strapped in on a roller coaster, in

fact, he was floating, the only tie to any kind of grounding is the space shuttle he took to get there.

Suddenly he felt a drop and he didn't notice that the roller coaster had reached the top and was already plummeting through the air.

Meri squealed and threw his hands up as they spun around and around vertically. They swung back and forth, the chairs rotating so that they wouldn't be upside down.

Ame, over his initial shock, enjoyed the ride and let out whoops and hollers, excitedly screaming. He would occasionally look over at Meri, seeing him smile and laugh with his hands up in the air. He laughed at some of the weird expressions he made, but knew no doubt he probably looked just as weird.

Meri decided to try something and flopped over forward so that his face was between his shins. He laughed loudly ad he felt his stomach flip at the confusing angle his brain didn't know how to handle. The metal bar made it a little uncomfortable but it was easy to ignore.

After a while of that though, Ame started to feel sick, and when the ride ended he felt relieved.

"Oh God, I'm gonna throw up, " he complained leaning against a guard rail that lead to the exit of the ride. "That one didn't do well for my stomach."

"Awww, honey," Meri giggled, rubbing his back and helping him off the ride. "Do you wanna go sit down somewhere? Maybe drink some water or something?"

"Some water would be good." Ame rubbed his stomach and allowed Meri to help him walk to a food stand to get water. The same way they got their fast passes, it was how they got the money for the water. And while they were at the stand, the thought of food popped up.

Meri, as if reading his mind chuckled and asked, "Would you like food too, your highness?"

Ame bowed, pretending to take the edges of a skirt and bowed. "With pleasure, dear sir."

Meri snorted, "You would make a beautiful princess, Ame."

He flipped his hair and tried to stand up tall and proud. "These are facts, thank you, " he laughed before looking around to see what he wanted to eat. "Did you want to pick something or should I? I mean, we'd probably both like it no matter what."

"Well, I was just gonna get a corn dog," Meri laughed, fishing money out of his pocket as they neared the front of the line. "And maybe a soda."

"I'm down for one of those too, my guy, " Ame then thought about it. "Or maybe just a regular hot dog. Or fuck it and get both."

Meri snickered, ordering his food and placing the money in the vendor's hand, waiting for his order.

"You sure you can handle that after almost dying after two rides?～" he teased, elbowing Ame.

He laughed, rolling his eyes. "Look, that was just because I was trying to do what you did and didn't do it right."

The vendor interrupted them and handed them their food. Ame took his and used his corn dog as sort of a pointer, turning it towards Meri and saying, "I can handle more than that."

"Oh, yea?" Meri smirked. "Well, then I've got a great thing for us to do."

"Oh, what might that be?" Ame asked, taking a bite of the hot dog.

Meri sticks the corn dog in his mouth, hands Ame his soda and grabs his shoulders to veer him towards another attraction.

Rolling with it, Ame just calmly eats and allows himself to be guided at Meri's wish.

Meri leads him to a cute little marquee with some kind looking

women and little girls around. It was evident from the designs on the marquee walls, the women's faces, and their equipment that this was a face painting station.

Meri let go of Ame's shoulders and bit the chunk of corn dog in his mouth off, pulling it away from his face. He used his other hand to cover his mouth so that no gross spit or anything would get on anyone.

"Ta-daaaa!" He said through a mouthful of food.

"Oh fuck yes, I wanna be a child. Lemme finish these, you go first, " Ame started stuffing his mouth to finish faster. He wanted to look like a doggo, or maybe have like a cool weird design running down his face. Fucking make himself look like a cat if he wanted to.

"Such a gentleman!" Meri snickered, sitting in the seat and paying the woman. He decided to be extra and go for his whole face to look like a doe with little rainbow flowers as decoration. Because he's just that gay man.

Ame hurried with his food as he watched Meri get his face painted over. He was thinking maybe he should go with a dog. Puppies are adorable and he knows he's adorable so it fits.

Once Meri's face was done he thanked the woman who gave him a candy for being "such a good boy" and left the seat for Ame to have his face painted.

"Alright, what would you like for today, dearie?" The lady asked as though she were his grandmother, even though she looked not a day over 30.

"Can you make me look like a dog?" He asked taking a seat and looking around at her stand. Different patterns for people or kids to choose from on a plastic sign. Thankfully there was one of a dog some he knew she could do it. It's not like the design was hard or anything anyway.

"Of course!" She smiled, picking up some brushes and colors. "Any particular style?"

Meri took a sip of his soda, "Do a dalmatian! You can be from 101 dalmatians and I can be Bambi's mother or something."

"Uh, wasn't Bambi's mom shot?" Ame raised a brow but stilled his face when the woman started to paint his face.

"Yupperooni- OH MY GOD" Meri gasps and grins widely. "Miss can you do special effects makeup??"

The lady chuckled, dabbing white all over Ame's already 1/3 white face, "Not really. I can make things look realistic if that's what you want?"

"Great! Ame, do you think I should get a bullet hole in my forehead just for funsies?!"

"Holy fuck that's so morbid! You have to do it now!" Ame smiled, finding a dark sense of humor in the painted wound.

"Hell yea, its happening," Meri leaned near the lady who was chuckling. "I mean, as long as youre happy to do it."

The lady laughed, "It's your money, sweetie."

She continued painting Ame's face, painting a small black nose, a bit of black around his eye, and dotted the rest of his face. When she finished she showed him her work through a mirror and Ame smiled, admiring it.

"Look at me, I'm adorable." He glanced from the mirror to look up at Meri. "You ready for that bullet to your head?"

"Oh absolutely!" Meri pulled him out of the chair by his hands and sat in it. "I bet you're jealous you don't get to be the one to shoot me~"

Ame rolled his eyes but then pretended to load a gun, and held it out at him and stayed there until the lady was done painting the bullet wound. When she did finish he pretends to shoot the gun at him.

Meri made a pained noise and slumped in his seat before shooting

up again and grinning, "Where to next, Dipstick?"

"I dunno Hambone, " Ame chuckled to himself and looked around. "Wanna play some games? I can beat you in any of them, just watch."

He winked at Meri but knew they probably both had similar strengths and weaknesses.

Meri laughed, walking towards a nearby game stall, "Oh youre on!"

The worker at the game stand sat up from his chair and started calling towards the two.

"Hey, you two, first place winner gets a prize!" The worker gestured to a small rack of mini stuffed animals. "The more players, the bigger the prize!"

Meri mumbled to himself with a confused smile, "What the fuck does that meeaaaaan."

The game is a wall of balloons and you have to throw darts at them. Different colors give different depending on their difficulty. Yellow balloons are 1 point each and red are 5 points each. Meri pays the man for darts to pop the balloons and each of them gets 3 darts.

"I think, the more people to compete against the bigger the stuffed animal. That or the guy is thinking of a different game, " Ame whispered to him, picking up his darts.

"When you work here, everything blurs together." The worker said before stepping back and letting the two do their thing.

"Aw, too bad there's only two of us," Meri chuckled. He pulled his hands back, then forward, back then forward, then back one last time to let it go and pierce the balloons. The dart went through one of the yellow balloons, then angled downwards to hit two more yellow balloons.

"Ha! Beat that!" Meri teased.

Ame smugly smiled and took aim for one of the red ones. All that

time of aiming at things have better paid off, he thought to himself.

He threw the dart and hit the balloon spot on. "I think I did, " he winked at Meri.

Meri poked his tongue out at him and flicked his arm. He took up another dart and aimed at a red one, hitting the blue one next to it, which was 3 points.

He groaned, "Damniiiiiit!"

Ame laughed and poked Meri's cheek teasing him. "Ha ha ha, " he taunted. "I can throw darts like nothing."

Being an asshole, he blindly threw a dart and it popped one of the yellow ones.

"Ha! Bitch!" Meri took his last dart and threw it at a red balloon, actually hitting it for once.

"Oh shiiiiit, look who's better now mother fucker," Meri said and booped Ame's nose.

Ame stuck out his tongue and grabbed his dart, aiming for another red one. Red is his color so this better work, he thought.

He took aim and threw the dart. It nearly hit the red one, and instead popped the blue one right next to it.

"Fuck!"

"Shit yes!!" Meri laughs, jumping around. "I won!"

He put his hands on the counter and leaned towards the vendor with a huge grin, "What do I win?"

The vendor gestured to a row of small stuffed animals, looking a little bit cheaply made but lovable none the less. There were a few different colored stuffed dogs, lizards, fish, even what looked like a panda.

"I'm willing to steal that green lizard as soon as he looks away,"

Ame whispered jokingly to Meri.

Meri chuckles and points to the lizard, "That one please sir!"

The man grabbed the stuffed animal and handed it to him, saying a few lines that he repeats to everyone who plays the game.

Meri took the lizard, popped it on Ame's head, thanked the man, and started walking off to the next attraction.

"I would have stolen it, you didn't have to choose this as your prize, " Ame told Meri as he balanced the lizard on his head. Even though he said that he was very happy to have him.

"

You can repay me by giving him a dope-ass name," Meri hummed, swinging his arms by his side.

"I dunno 'bout dope-ass, but I am feeling Quiznos. From that one meme, " Ame took the lizard off his head and looked at its lopsided eyes. "Quizzy for short."

"Well then Quizzy," Meri kissed the stuffed lizards fluffy head. "Welcome to the world!"

Ame giggled and held the lizard close to himself, cuddling it like a small child. "Quizzy is never leaving my side whether he likes it or not."

Meri snickers and takes Quizzy from his arms gently, throwing him up in the air repeatedly and laughing.

"I dont even know which way the Quiznos is!"

Ame laughed at the reference and grabbed Quizzy from the air. He used him as a pointer to another ride.

"The Quiznos is that way!"

Meri looked around for a new attraction. They probably shouldn't go on another big, crazy ride because they had eaten and that. Well,

let's just say it probably wouldn't end well at all.

As he searched he noticed something out of the corner of his eye and grinned, tugging on America's arm.

"Wanna annoy the shit out of a fortune-teller?"

Ame paused and looked to see what Meri meant. There was a small tent that gave off a magical purple galaxy vibe, the labeling of it being that of a fortune-teller. There was a sign outside the entrance flaps that read about fortune, tarot card readings, and other magical wonderous things.

It was something you'd see out of a movie, it was that stereotypical.

"Fuck yes, " Ame grabbed Meri's hand and held onto his small little lizard in the other. He marched them both to the tent, wanting nothing but to laugh at the ridiculous things the person might say. Or get creeped out if it all came true.

Meri giggled and caught up to him, swinging their hands back and forth, "You think we can ask how we die??"

"I would rather not, " Ame just rolled his eyes and thought. "Oh, what if we asked them of our future. Or like. When we could hang out next."

Meri pouts, "But what if they say never?? I would rather not know if they just said we were never gonna see each other again."

"Oh yeah, true. Maybe we can ask like what cool new adventure we'll go on. Or what'll happen with my stupid closeted Russia, " Ame laughed to himself slightly, before frowning. "He found out before, he can find out again."

"Don't worry, Im sure he will!" Meri said hopefully, smiling at him and rubbing his back as though he were a grieving parent. "There, there."

"Yeah, he better, or I wasted my time, " Ame joked, trying not to sound sad as to not put a damper on their time. "Maybe this person can tell me."

"Well let's ask them!"

Meri pulled Ame into the main tent, where a small circular table with a long purple table cloth, adorned with little crescent moon patterns. A glowing ball laying in a metal claw shed a small amount of pale blue light on a lady shrouded in purple robes.

"Greetings, my children. I have been expecting you."

Meri leaned in close to Ame's ear and whispered, "Sure she was."

Ame chuckled with him. He stopped when he noticed the unamused look on her face.

"I have heard that line so many times, I don't even need to look into the future to tell when people will say it." She said flatly, adjusting herself in her seat.

Meri looked down sheepishly, taking a seat in front of her, "Sorry, that was rude. I just don't really believe in future stuff."

The lady smiled. "That's alright, dearie. Not many people do. But don't worry, " she waved them to move a little closer. "They always leave believing."

Meri raised his eyebrows and beckoned Ame over by waving his hand, pulling out the chair beside him for him.

"Can we test you?" Meri asked.

Ame sat down as soon as the lady nodded.

"Test me any way you like. I've seen countless things and countless possibilities for countless people."

Meri points at Quiznos, "What's this stuffed lizard's name?"

The fortune-teller looked at Ame and to the lizard, a questionable look on her face but one she soon straightened out.

"Quiz." She mumbled, focusing on the stuffed toy. "Quiznos."

Meri gasped and held his cheeks like the kid at home alone, "She IS real!"

The lady laughed.

"Alright, that might be obvious, she could have heard us from outside the tent." Ame tried to reason. "What's my pet turtles name?"

"You don't have a pet turtle."

Ame sat back and looked over to Meri. "Okay, magic is real."

"Fuckin Amen, I pledge myself to the gods of fake turtles and Quiznos lizards!" Meri laughed, raising his hands to the sky.

The lady chuckled and sat back, "Would you two like to know about your future now or just continue telling jokes?"

"Uh, future, please, " Ame said with a small chuckle in his words as he tried to calm himself down. He set his hand on Meri's arm to try and steady him, as well, as if his calming down would go to him through touch.

The lady smiled and hovered her hand over the crystal ball, which she apparently hadn't needed until then. "Which one of you would like to go first?"

Meri looks over at Ame's anxious expression and holds his hand, intertwining their fingers to reassure him.

He turns to smile at the woman, "I'll go first."

Ame held his hand tightly, slightly worried if the woman would find anything majorly bad about Meri's future.

He watched with slanted eyebrows and a worried frown as the woman made smooth circular motions above the glass ball.

"I see...you. Married. Happily in love. I see stars, I see pets and I see a grave."

Meri frowns, "is it my grave?"

The lady closes her eyes, her face tilting as she concentrated, little wisps of light emitting from the ball.

"No. It is the grave of a good friend of yours. However, you do not seem upset. You are on a hill with two other people, enjoying the company, something I'm sure your friend would appreciate. And I see...someone that is not quite you finding love in someone as well."

Meri leaned forward, eyes wide, "Who is...who are they in love with?"

"This person...he has fallen for the child of someone close to you - someone who you care about deeply."

Meri frowned, "Who would I- ok."

"Wait, who? What is she talking about, a grave?" Ame frowned, holding onto Meri a little tighter. "Do you know, or what about the last one?"

"I- I don't know, I don't think she's going to tell us," Meri murmured, furrowing his brow and staring at the tablecloth.

The woman turned to Ame and smiled, "Would you like your future told, America?"

Ame shivered when she said his name, even though he hadn't told her. She must recognize his flag, that's all, he tried to reason with himself.

"Uh yeah, " he gulped. "Lay it on me."

The fortune-teller waved her hands over the ball and closed her eyes again. Shifting light brightened then dimmed inside the sphere, casting shadows and causing them to dance around the room as the way shadows do with fire.

"I see-" she narrowed her brows "-you happy in love. But, then."

Ame leaned closer, hanging on every word that she spoke.

"I see, something dark." Her expression contorted to one of worry mixed with concentration. "Black wings, two pairs of them. I see fighting, a lost boy, and."

She opened her eyes and her hand hovered over her mouth. Of course, she's seen death, graves, and has seen everything after. But so soon?

"Oh, " she breathed out. "I'm so sorry, hon. I wish I could stop you, but you'd do anything for him.

Ame's eyes widened and he looked at her fearfully. "What?"

"I apologize, but I can't tell you. Not this, this is too, " the woman struggled to find the words. She couldn't tell him because it would be written in stone. Nothing could change it. Regular people wouldn't be able to understand it. Things are set in place and nothing can be done about it.

The woman shook her head solemnly, standing up, her robes seemingly floating around her.

"You must go. Your time here is nearly up, and should not spend all of it here."

She sighed gravely, "I'm sorry you came so early, I only wish you could have had more time."

She looked to both of them, shaking her head as she moved from her chair to push through curtains muttering a few last words.

"I wish you had more time."

Meri gaped as the curtain swished closed behind her, "What. The. Fuuuuuuuck."

Ame looked at him with wide eyes, obviously fearful. "I think I don't wanna believe in magic anymore."

Meri frowned, getting up from his seat and dusting off his legs, "We should uhhhh. Go."

"Yeah. Yeah we, " Ame gulped and stood up, watching the light from the crystal ball grow dim. "We should. Maybe we can go...do something."

"Uhhhh. Do you wanna go on another ride or something? I think I saw a rock climbing wall back near the rides, " Meri said, offering Ame a small smile and taking his hand to guide him out of the ambient tent.

"Uh yeah. Yeah, that sounds like a good idea." Ame allowed himself to be lead away from the tent, trying to push those haunting words from the woman out of his head.

Meri smiled and started sprinting towards the ride area, where a large rock wall was peeking out behind a large ride.

"I'll race you!!"

"Hey, that's not fair!" Ame yelled, chasing after him. He still held onto Quizzy, holding him tightly as to not drop him while he ran after his look alike.

Meri giggled and grabbed onto a lamppost to swing around before running into a cart, zigzagging through more carnival games and confused people eating food or walking around.

Once Ame saw him parkouring around the crowd and objects, he knew he had to do the same.

"Time spent showing off in front of Russia, don't fail me now," Ame mumbled to himself as he planned a path ahead of him. Dodge a few people, jump on a bench, and over whatever the hell that was, and he could get to Meri fast.

Meri saw Ame catching up to him and chuckled, deciding to pull out his favorite trump card. He stuck his hand out to grab onto the side of a particular carnival game he was fond of, twisting into the darkness between it and the good stall next to it, a little shortcut. He slipped through the small cracks of the portable Carney games, dancing around wires and rocks, turning up on the other side of the wall of trucks. He smirked to himself, sashaying over to a cotton

candy seller to grab a snack. He highly doubted Ame would be able to follow him - the food stalls were as complicated and fickle as the French catacombs.

Ame narrowed his eyes when he saw Meri duck between the rides, smiling at the challenge. He had a feeling he's been through a similar situation, running through a darkened area with many twists and turns, so the instinct helped him.

Admittedly, he stumbled a few times over the wires, but he pushed past the fair labyrinth and spotted Meri eating cotton candy. Should he scare him? He should, he is now legally required to.

Meri grabbed the other cotton candy he had bought for Ame and happily ate his blue one, enjoying the feeling of it melting in his mouth. As he stood there holding the two treats he realized mayyyyybe he should go find Ame in case he was dumb and got lost between the stalls.

Just as he saw Meri turn, Ame shouted in his face, "BOO!"

Meri screamed and jumped back, knocking into a random bystander and almost toppling the both of them.

After apologizing to the lady Meri glared at Ame, kicking him gently in the shin, "What was that for??"

His answer was just Ame laughing, trying to cover his mouth with his hands as to not cause a scene. Well, not bigger than the one he just made that is.

"That was for pure entertainment, " Ame said with the laughter still laced in his words.

Meri pouted and took a bite out of the cotton candy he bought for him, flipping him off, "You dont get cotton candy anymore, fuck you."

"Aww, come on please?" Ame puffed out his bottom lip and tried his best at puppy dog eyes. He even added a whine for good measure.

Meri tried to hide a smile and sighed, handing over the cotton

candy.

"Yes!"

Ame happily ate the cotton candy, feeling the pieces just dissolve in his mouth.

"What you wanna do now?"

Meri flicked Ame's face-painted nose and took a bite from the cotton candy in the other's hand because yknow. Salty.

"Um. Well, it's getting late so...wanna go on the Ferris wheel?"

Ame narrowed his eyes at Meri but just rolled his eyes. "Yeah, let's go to the Ferris wheel before you eat more of my cotton candy."

He tucked Quizzy under his arm holding his cotton candy and grabbed Meri's hand with his other to start leading them both to the Ferris wheel.

Meri chuckled and swung their hands back and forth again, "Hey, you're forgetting I was the one who bought it, dumbass."

"That's not the point, " the other said in a sing-song voice, taking a bite out of the fluffy treat. "Either way, I bet we can see everything from up on top of the wheel."

"Oooooo, yea. I bet we can look on all the randos," Meri giggled, taking a bite of his own. "Do you think they're real? Or do you think they're just like? Simulations??"

Ame furrowed his brows and looked at the passing people. They looked real, having their own conversations, families walking together, kids complaining, teenagers laughing. They acted real, looked real, and it felt real. Doesn't that make it real?

"I kind of want to poke one of their faces to check." Ame slowly took a bite out of the cotton candy and studied the face of someone waiting in line for another ride, staring down at their phone screen.

Meri snickered, "If you do that, I'll buy you a rainbow dash doll."

Ame sharply inhaled and let go of Meri's hand to go walk up to a random stranger.

The unfortunate victim of American randomness was busy laughing at something on his phone. Caught in a moment of distraction, he didn't hear America approach. Instead, he felt his cheek get poked by someone and he looked up quickly to see by who.

"Huh, " and rubbed his chin before poking the poor guy again. "Looks real."

"Can you not?" The guy told him off, swatting his and away. That was enough of a warning for Ame, so he left the man alone.

Meri covered his mouth to hide his grin as Ame shuffled shamefully back to him, "Did ya have fun?"

Ame shrugged. "I mean, I freaked out a random person, you'd said you'd get me a rainbow dash plushie, so life's good."

"And I'm a gay of my word! Stay here."

Meri slinked out of the line for the Ferris wheel and walked up to a showbag stall, pointing at a fairly large rainbow dash plushie and handing over some money for it.

In the line, Ame was buzzing with excitement when he saw Meri get handed the stuffed pony. Before he could turn around he withheld his excitement and tried to play it cool.

Meri returned to the line, apologizing to the people he had to squeeze past and popped Rainbow Dash on Ame's head, clasping his hands together and tilting his head.

"Awwww, you two make such a cute couple!" Meri cooed, batting his eyelashes.

"Oh, hush, " he laughed.

Ame grabbed the pony and set Quizzy on her back so that he was held on securely by the wings.

"Look, now it's better, " he placed the two back on his head. "The two can be chilling with me now."

"Oooooo a polyamory hey?" Meri giggled, moving forward as they got closer and closer to the front of the line.

"More like ponya-mory, " Ame elbowed him, disappointed and proud of himself for the pun.

Meri covered his face and sighed, "That was fuckin horrible. Im disowning you."

"'Ight, I understand, " Ame dramatically sighed and turned around. "I'll be on my way then."

Slowly he took a step away from Meri as if he were going to walk away. He was even hanging his head low, holding onto the stuffed animals to make sure they wouldn't fall.

"Nooooo, I'm sorry come back!" Meri laughed, hugging him from behind and pulling him back into the main area of the line.

Ame held his arms, holding him in place in the hug, all while balancing the stuffed animals on his head.

"Knew you liked me too much to let me leave," he joked, laughing at the both of them.

Meri just hummed in response, resting his head on his shoulder and closed his eyes. He let his arms hang fairly loosely on Ame's torso, letting the other's fluffy hair tickle his skin. The sun was almost setting which was going to create a beautiful scene for the two of them on the Ferris wheel but at the same time, it meant the day was ending. Half of him was upset that his little day out with Ame was coming to a close, but the other side of him was just content and sleepy.

His lack of words confused Ame, but since they were next in line to be put in one of the carts, he decided he would ask if something was wrong on the ride.

It was a beautiful evening, he would hate to have Meri even a little

bit sad. Hopefully, the hug was as comforting for him as it was to Ame.

When the time came for them to hop onto the ride, Meri let go of Ame and sat in one of the comfy cushioned seats of the small cart. He helped Ame get on by holding his hand and guiding him on, as to not knock the plushies of course. Once they were both seated the door was closed and lifted up so that the next people could go on.

The ball was big enough to fit maybe 4 people and was comprised of mainly light grey walls and four large tinted windows. The seats were plush and soft - the kind that sunk when you sat in them which Meri appreciated. The floor was a grainy black with a carpet-like consistency and the ceiling was just the same color as the walls. It was a surprisingly high budget for a fair.

Meri let his eyes flutter closed and leaned back into the seat, resting his head on the glass of the window behind him. He was thankful for the tinted windows because they allowed you to see the sunset but they didn't let in the harshness of the oranges, reds, pinks, and purples.

Ame took the stuffed animals and held them in his lap as he looked around admiring the quality of the ride. Usually, Ferris wheels are a staple of a fair so it makes sense that the wheel would have the most money put into it.

Their cart started rising a little to allow the next people on. One more cart had to be filled before they could start spinning fully. Seeing the view at the top would be amazing to have, too. A nice way to end the day.

When Ame looked over at Meri, he frowned. He set his hand on his arm and asked, "Hey you okay?"

Meri peeked over at him, not opening his eyes too much, before closing them again, "Yea, I'm fine. Just tired, yknow?"

Not fully believing him, Ame put his arm around him and moved him so Meri's head was rested on his chest. He knew he liked being comforted with touch, either by hugging or just someone holding

his hand. He wasn't entirely sure it would be the same with Meri, but since the two had already been huggy and physical with each other it would make sense. At least in his head.

"Don't fall asleep on my now, the rides just starting, " Ame teased, working on getting a smile.

Meri chuckled, shifting slightly to wrap his arm around Ame's waist and nuzzle more into his chest, "Then you shouldn't have given me such a good pillow."

Ame laughed and held onto Meri close and looked out the window watching the sunset. The colors were pretty, albeit dulled down due to the windows. He couldn't remember the last time he just relaxed completely and watched a sunset. Funny enough it had to be in a completely different world with an alternate version of him, but he'll take relaxation where he could get it.

"You should see the sunset when we get to the top again." Ame nudged Meri with Rainbow Dash's muzzle. "It's so pretty."

"Not as pretty as you," Meri muttered before pausing. "Hold on, is it narcissistic if I say that?"

Meri opened one eye too look at Rainbow Dash and smiled, giving her a little peck on the cheek for her efforts.

Ame blinked and furrowed his brows in confusion. "Huh. I think, maybe? No? Yeah?"

To avoid a headache, he shook his head free of the thoughts and smiled down at Meri. "If it is, call me a narcissist, cause you're pretty, too."

The other snickered, "Thanks man. No homo though, right?"

"This is us we are talking about, it's always full homo," Ame laughed at his own joke but then realized how that sounded. "I mean, yeah no homo."

"No, no, no," Meri held up a finger to his face, not really knowing where it was going since his eyes were closed but hoping it landed

on his nose or something. "Full homo, no romo. Boom, magic."

His finger was poking his cheek, so when Ame laughed Meri accidentally poked his eye.

"Ahh, I've been attacked!" He yelled, using his freeish hand to rub his eye.

Meri jumped back and covered his mouth with his hands, "Shit I'm so sorry!"

Now fully alert and awake, Meri moved to help him but decided against it since there wasn't really much he could do, and just ended up shrinking into himself.

"It's okay, it's okay, I promise, " Ame laughed it off, but blinked a few times. "Last time I got poked in the eye it was by my own glasses."

He stopped when he saw Meri look a little misplaced.

"Hey, really, I'm fine, you didn't do anything wrong," he set his hand on his shoulder to help reassure him.

Meri shook his head and took Ame's hand off with a smile, "It's ok i was just worried because I did something dumb, sorry Ame."

He frowns more when he sees the smudge he made in Ame's face paint, "And I ruined your beautiful makeup too."

Ame thought for a moment and took his finger, smudging the paint under Meri's eye.

"There, now we are even."

Meri giggled and smudged his other cheek, "Gotta be symmetrical man."

"Well, to bother you I won't, " Ame stuck out his tongue playfully.

Meri gasped, "Fine! I'll mind control you into doing it."

He made spooky alien/ghost noises and twiddled his fingers in front of Ame's face before taking his hand and moving it to his cheek to smudge off some of the deer make up.

Ame laughed and went along with it, looking at Meri acting ridiculous. Before he could move his hand off of his own, Ame held it to his cheek and hummed. It was such a reassuring feeling and he didn't want it to go away so quickly.

Meri smiled and tucked some hair out of Ame's face with his other hand, "You ok, hon?"

Ame hummed his reply and shut his eyes, no doubt smearing the paint on his hand.

"It feels nice to just relax, " he spoke quietly. Then he chuckled lightly and added, "ignore the creepy lady stuff of course."

"Pshhhh, what creepy lady stuff?" Meri chuckled nervously, rubbing his thumb back and forth on his cheek. He pulled Ame's head onto his shoulder and rested his chin in his hair.

The soft smile grew a little wider as Ame adjusted himself to fit in the comforting hold a little better. Their cart was going up again, reaching its peak and he stole a glance out the window.

A view of the sun's last remaining light, the fair's own electric lights buzzing on and flashing bright vibrant colors. It was amazing how much carefree fun he had. No worries about his eyes, his episodes, nothing. Everything had just been. Peaceful.

Meri wrapped his free arm around Ame and tangled his fingers in his hair, messing it all up because duh. He watched as the bright reds and oranges and yellows of the sky dip below the horizon and hummed quietly, relaxing into the chair again.

"You know, I wish you could come back with me," Ame muttered, afraid to speak in his normal voice due to the peaceful quiet.

Meri frowned, focusing on untangling a few knots in his hair, "I know. I wish I could take you with me. There's so much you should see, so many people I'd love for you to meet."

Meri pulled him in a bit tighter, sighing, "...I wish you didn't have to forget about me."

The small smile that remained on Ame's face turned into a slight frown.

"Oh yeah. I guess that has to happen when I go back, huh?" He sighed, squeezing Meri in a tight hug before loosening his hold on him just so he could breathe and move.

"I guess so," Meri breathed, looking at him sadly, holding him close.

Ame looked up at Meri and tried for a smile. "You got me here once you can do it again right?"

Meri chuckled, trying to fix some sticky-uppy bits of his hair again, "Do you know the shit I went through to get you here this time? I literally had Ella kidnap you from your house."

"Wait really?" Ame blinked for a second then said with a laugh, "that's okay, you can do it again."

Meri laughed too, "I have your consent??"

"Yeah, you do. Well, I might freak out if some random person tries to kidnap me, so I dunno knock me out first?"

Their ride slowed to a stop, their little cart about three carts away from the top. The ride operator had begun to let people off the ride, which means Ame and Meri would have a moment at the very top of the Ferris wheel, seeing the landscape that spread around them.

Ame, momentarily distracted by the sudden stop of the ride, looked back away from the window and up at Meri.

Meri smiled back down at him, rhythmically stroking through his hair to keep his hands occupied. He gazed softly into Ame's black eyes, admiring how something he hated so much about himself looked so lovely on another version of him.

Realizing they were both just staring at each other, Meri blushed ever so slightly and whispered, "Hi."

"Hey, " Ame whispered back, seeing the small hint of red that grew on Meri's cheeks. He smiled, finding his shocked response to just greet him adorable.

Their cart moved again, skipping a spot for an empty one. Still, the motion was barely noticeable, at least it was to Ame. He just in turn slowly sat up a little more, not completely sure what he was doing.

Meri moved his arm from around his shoulders down to his waist, unconsciously pulling him a bit closer.

Just as their cart reached the very top of the Ferris Wheel, Ame had moved his hands to Meri's shoulders and closed his eyes. He leaned in closer to Meri, slowly moving, carefully trying to move towards his welcoming lips.

Meri stopped breathing. He stopped thinking. He didn't think about his Russia or Ame's Russia or anyone else. In that moment there was nothing but him, his friend, and the gorgeous sunset shining on his pretty face.

So instead of pulling away, Meri reciprocated by moving slowly closer and closing his eyes as well, Ame's warm breath tickling his face.

And then suddenly it wasn't. And he wasn't. There was no weight on his lap, no breath on his mouth, no warm hands holding him. Just him, the sunset, and an empty Ferris wheel cart.

Meri looked down at the black and white smudged on his hands, a deep scarlet invading his cheeks and making him cover his face.

"Holy fuck I almost kissed a different version of myself," Meri groaned, pulling his face down and no doubt ruining his face paint. "What the fuck is wrong with me."

In a moment, Ame opened his eyes and recognized the ceiling of his bedroom immediately. It took him a moment before he realized that it wasn't where he had just been.

Wait, Meri!

He shot up and looked around to see him alone in his bedroom, everything as he left it when he had fallen asleep. He fell asleep before everything happened. Was it all a dream?

Ame, realizing it was all some weird bizarre dream that was already fading away the moment he opened his eyes laid back down. It was still dark out, the sky a little lightened. He could get some more sleep.

He felt something next to him when he moved to get comfortable so he grabbed it to move it aside. As soon as he did, he paused and realized what he held in his hand.

A green stuffed lizard. Right next to where it had been was a Rainbow Dash plush.

"How the hell?"

**((Don't expect me to explain myself. I would blame Mystery but I willingly participated.))**

**WHOOOO WHERE WE LEFT OFF! Alright, back on schedule.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**
**~Galaxy**

# Technical Date

**Narrator's POV**

Saying Russia was nervous would have been an understatement.

"Польша сказала что надо носить что нибудь красивое (Poland said to wear something nice)," Russia said out loud to himself as he looked in his closet for a nice shirt or sweater. What would be considered nice? Nice like a shirt without profanity, or a shirt that seems professional?

Was it a different kind of nice?

Can't he just wear his Adidas tracksuit?

He looked at the top half of the mentioned outfit and thought about it. It seems nice to him. It was supposed to be a chilly night, he wouldn't be dying of heat in it either.

Russia turned his back to the closet and walked over to his dresser to find the pants to it, which he found easily. He was about to grab them when he heard a noise behind him. Quickly, he turned his head and saw that a shirt with its hanger had fallen on the floor.

Confused, he went to go put it back and get his sweater out but as he held the shirt in one hand and tried to find the sweater with the other he became confused. Where the hell did it go? The sweater he was going to wear, it was just in front of him what the hell. Where could it have gone?

"Hmm," Russia hummed to himself, spinning in a circle to see if he dropped it somewhere and didn't see it. It seemed to have grown legs and walked away.

Confused, he looked down at the shirt he had in his hand. It was a black long sleeve shirt, one that he knew he bought with a dark-colored infinity scarf. He thought about it and tried to piece

together something with it. Maybe his tracksuit pants could go with it.

He turned back to his dresser to grab the pants but paused once he got close. Confused once more, he set down his shirt and dug in the drawer for the pants he wanted. They weren't there, what the hell? He had just seen them, hadn't he?

Giving up slightly, he grabbed a pair of ripped jeans instead and decided that maybe this was better than a tracksuit after all. It seemed nice. He'd just have to check his eyesight, maybe he's going blind or something.

"Ооо, посмотри, какой ты красивый на своем первом свидании, (Ohhh, look at you looking so handsome on your first date)," Belarus clapped her hands excitedly when she saw Russia coming down the steps. She was also relieved he didn't wear anything weird, or she would have sent him right back to get a different outfit.

"Сур'ёзна? Вы збіраецеся з гэтым?(Seriously? You are going with that?)" Kaz teased, poking his head out from the kitchen entrance. Russia gave him a look and received one back. Thankfully, a hand hit Kaz upside the back of the head and Armenia came from the kitchen, obviously being the one who hit him.

"Մետացում եմ, որ Ռուսաստանը էսկան լավ շուտվանիծ չի եղել. (I think this is the nicest Russia has looked in a long time.)"

What was supposed to be a compliment, still managed to sound like an insult. Russia still just ruffled Armenia's hair, who quickly tried to fix it, and said his thanks.

"Извините, что разочаровал вас троих, но это не свидание, (Sorry to disappoint you three, but this isn't a date, )" Russia walked past them to get a thin jacket that wouldn't look bad with what he was wearing. Usually, he didn't give a shit about what he wore, he actually only got the shirt with the scarf cause he needed a new shirt and it was the first one he saw that wasn't too expensive.

"Ну, технически это свидание (Well, it's technically a date),"

Belarus pointed out. "Ужин вместе, плюс кино. И ты действительно так нарядилась для него. (Dinner together, a movie. And you did get all dressed up for him.)"

Russia sighed and leaned his forehead on the wall in front of him. After a moment, he turned to look at the three with desperate eyes and said, "Я не хочу облажаться, у вас троих есть какие-нибудь советы? (I don't want to screw this up, do you three have any advice?)"

"Լավ, (Well,)" Armenia grabbed a red thin jacket and handed it to him. "ամեմինչ ավելի լավ կեէրևա քան թե ինչ կա դուրսը. (This will look better than anything you have out here.)"

Russia put it on, forgetting where he even bought the jacket. It was his, he could tell by the way it fit him. Belarus told him just to be himself, while Kaz jokingly told him that would never work. He knew Kaz was just trying to make jokes to calm down his nerves, so he went along with it. The effort was appreciated.

The plan was to meet each other outside the restaurant. It was a nice one, a common one to go to since it had any dish from any country. Almost like an automated buffet, which he knew America would like.

He just still had to tell America this was something close to a date. He had been procrastinating on it, and finally, a week later he got the courage to ask America if he wanted to go out and eat with him. A part of him hoped he'd say no, but another part of him really wanted him to say yes.

Russia got to the restaurant first and waited by the entrance doors, scrolling through his phone to pass the time. It was still daylight out, still being around 2 in the afternoon. Dinner someplace other than his own home seemed a little too suggestive too soon so he balanced it by eating around lunchtime. A little after it, actually to seem more casual.

Was it casual? Is it too casual?

Is he overthinking this?

"Ruski!"

America spotted the big Russian and started to run over to him. He saw him look up and his eyes widen quickly, the phone almost falling from his hand. The small little surprised face was what America planned for when he decided to wear a red crop top. He hadn't worn one in a while, and what better time than now. He wanted to look cute, and seeing Russia's reaction would be priceless.

And it was.

"блять (Fuck)," Russia mumbled to himself and put his phone away, feeling his cheeks burn. He took a deep breath to try and not show that he was affected in any way when America came up to him.

"How'd you like my shirt, I think I look cute."

Russia looked at him for a second longer, looking him up and down. He was showing a lot of skin, his arms and shoulders exposed, along with his curvy stomach. His jeans were cut weirdly, one leg of his pants cut off to fit the length of shorts while the other side was cut just below the knee. The longer pant leg was full of rips, like his own jeans, but the style and look of it confused him. It was. . . strange. It looked good on him, honestly, but something he wouldn't say out loud. But still, Poland said to compliment him.

"You look utterrrly stupid."

"Awww, your blushing says otherwise.~" America teased, poking his cheek.

"Let's just go inside." Russia huffed, opening the door for him to enter.

"Such a gentleman."

"Just go in."

America laughed but did as told and started looking for an open seat he liked. There were a few countries inside, eating and chatting was not bothering to look up at the two. He wanted a booth, one

away from other countries so it was just him and Russia alone talking. No distractions and no one close enough to hear them talk gayly for Russia's comfort.

"Found us a seat," America said grabbing Russia's hand and dragging him to the booth he spotted in the corner. Russia, having little choice, allowed himself to be dragged along. He glanced behind them and noticed how far away they were to the two doored exit. Normally he'd like to sit close to the nearest exits, feeling safer there. In case there was ever an emergency he can quickly get out.

"Okay, so, I actually have something funny to tell you."

"Oh?"

"Yes, the last time I was here I was with Australia, and he for some reason snuck in one of his snakes and it got loose without us knowing. Well, until we heard screaming that is." America leaned back in his booth seat, reminiscing on the memory that almost got them banned from the restaurant. "He and Brazil were able to get it handled, and we almost got in serious trouble, it was fantastic."

"You and yourrr family arrre strrrange." Russia rolled his eyes, smiling at the story. He couldn't help but smile, even if he did find it weird that their version of fantastic involves them almost getting thrown out of a restaurant. Weird, but strangely making sense.

"That's bold coming from you," America poked his leg with his foot. Russia raised a brow and America explained further. "You and your family with your gathered fights, or what you call family dinners."

"They arrren't fights."

"You attacked one of them cause they were going to take a bowl of soup, or whatever it was, home."

"It was okrrroshka and I vill fight vith my life forrr it."

America laughed, covering his mouth slightly to not disturb anyone else in the restaurant. Seeing him giggling at something as simple as that made Russia's heart flutter and his face grew a little warm. He cleared his throat and looked to where the food was.

It was a buffet-style formate, with different types of food for you to pick up. It changed every day, and it was an automated system that UN and FAO had a couple of countries build together. If someone wanted a certain dish, they would have to request it. But that was too much work so no one really did it.

After a while, the two got their food and sat back down. The normal atmosphere between them managed to calm Russia down enough to where he wasn't as anxious as he had been. He decided that for now, he would push the idea of this being a date out of his mind. That way he wouldn't be so prone to messing up.

"But now since Mexico's place needs more repairs, he's back staying at my house again. Until he can figure out what is wrong."

America had gone into a story as he slowly munched on the rest of his fries. Russia, who hadn't grabbed much to eat to begin with, had already finished his plate and was just listening to America ramble.

"Is yourrr father going to be okay vith him staying vith you all?"

"Hmm? Oh, Mex isn't staying at my dad's place."

Russia blinked in confusion. "I zought you said he vas staying vith you?"

"No, he's staying at my place. The house I own."

"You own yourrr own house?"

America nodded but kept his mouth closed while he chewed on his food. After a second, he explained, "yeah, dude. I kind of take care of it every now and then but a few countries stay there every now and then when they need to. Mex practically lives there, too, and I've offered it to him but he didn't want to give up his place. Even if there's always something new wrong with it. Doesn't even let me try and help him fix it, either."

"Huh. You've never mentioned yourrr house beforrre."

"Well, you never asked." America raised a brow with his smug smile and Russia rolled his eyes. "Besides, I barely go there, all my stuff is

at my dad's place. I kind of use it as a getaway when I need some alone time though."

The tone in his voice dropped a little, Russia noticed, but by America's expression, he was trying to make it seem like there was nothing wrong. If someone you like is even a little saddened, you try and make them feel better. Romantic interest or not.

"How have you been doing vith yourrr family?"

"Oh great, you know normal stuff. Canada and Mex are hanging out all the time at our place, so that's kind of annoying but it's no big deal. They are just loud.

"Aussie actually is out trying to study more of his animals and actually helping Brazil research the animals around his place too. And you know how Zee is, he was over at your place like yesterday right?"

Russia nodded, taking note that he left out stuff with his dad and mom. He waited for a second to see if he would mention them but when he did seem interested in doing so, Russia knew something was up.

"What of yourrr parrrents."

"Oh, they're chill, ya' know?"

"Hm."

America fidgeted with his plate before trying to change the subject. "But anyway, you said you wanted to hang out after we ate right? Cause I had this really weird dream last night and you have to hear about it."

Not being fooled slightly, Russia knew what America was doing. Even so, he went along with the distraction for now. He could ask him later if he needed to.

The two paid for their food and headed out. Russia was thinking that maybe they could take their leftovers—by theirs, he meant mostly America's cause he took a few extra stuff for later—and

finish them at the park. Maybe they should do that around the evening so they could watch the sunset. It seemed romantic and not too extreme.

"I dont remember much of what happened, but like, so it was me and another version of myself at like a fair," America explained his dream to Russia as they walked down the street to somewhere. They had no plan, other than Russia's later goal, so everything up until then was free-range.

"And we went on rides, you know normal stuff. I think I remember seeing a creepy fortune teller lady, you know like the kind with the cards and magic crystal ball and stuff?"

"A gypsy?"

"Yeah sure. So me and this other version of me, he won a game and got a green stuffed lizard, and another one which I can't remember what its called," he lied through his teeth, knowing very well it was a Rainbow Dash plush that he didn't want to admit to keeping. Or even wanting.

"But yeah so. When I woke up this morning, those same stuffed animals were on my bed!"

"Okay?"

"But that's the thing, I didn't have those before I went to bed."

Russia raised a brow, uncertain about what he meant. "What arrre you saying?"

"Look, I know it sounds crazy," America rubbed his face and made a groaning sound. He knew a lot of outlandish things happen to him, but this one seemed way too weird. "But I think somehow those stuffed animals came out of my dream."

"You'rrre rrright it sounds crrrazy."

"I know! But it just. It happened!"

Russia chuckled seeing America get all frustrated with himself. To

further tease him, he added, "happened just as how you saw a UFO?"

"Look, it was an unidentified flying object. Bite me."

"Maybe later."

Russia blinked and realized what he said. He quickly turned around and saw that America had paused and was looking up at him.

"What?" He asked, a slight surprise smile on his face.

"Nyet, I didn't mean it like zat," Russia quickly covered up, his face growing red. "You know I didn't mean to, too. I zought you verrre going to say 'fight me'!"

"You sure?" He stepped closer to Russia, causing him to stumble backward. It was amusing to him, satisfying even to see the obvious blush on the usual stone-cold Russian expression.

"I vill not hesitate to push you in the strrreet," Russia warned, trying his best to look annoyed by narrowing his eyebrows and speaking through clenched teeth. Instead, he managed to make himself look even more flustered.

America laughed at him but stepped back, slightly worried Russia would hold up to his promise. The dude did almost drown him for making a pun. "Fine, I'll let you off the hook this time, Ruski."

Russia's sigh of relief was cut short when he felt America grab his hand and start dragging him down the street. He was going on about a store they had to check out, but Russia could only focus on the smaller hand in his own. He prayed America wouldn't turn around and see how red his face got.
He's held his hand before why is now any different? Is it because he didn't really want to think about it anyway other than just holding someone's hand? Why did this fluster him it's just a fucking hand!

"My point is, we have to check it out."

Fuck he didn't hear anything he said.

"Hey," Russia swallowed the lump in his throat quickly and tried to act nonchalant. "I zought maybe ve kould go to vatch a movie orrr something. Orrr whatever."

"Yeah, I gotta meet someone real quick though," America didn't give Russia the reaction he was hoping for, and instead held onto his hand and looked around on the street corner. He used his free hand to shield his eyes from the sun and was straining his eyes to see if he could spot the country he was looking for. Then by the open farmers market, he noticed the black, red, and green stripes of the younger country.

"Found her," he said, looking across the road to make sure no cars where coming. "You want to come, or stay here? It'll only take a minute."

Russia looked across and noticed the rather crowded market. His stomach churned when the idea of a lot of countries seeing him holding America's hand or the way that he would be dressed around him. As soon as he thought of that, he didn't want others to see America as he was dressed. The idea of someone else looking at America in any way close to admiration made him scowl a little bit.
He decided he would walk to the edge of the market with him, just to make sure nothing happened and if something did, he wouldn't be stuck on the other side of the road.

The young country, who was holding her arms crossed and trying to appear hidden from the other countries, looked up and noticed America walking towards her. Russia was able to recognize her flag when she turned fully to look at America, the shield, and spear patterns on the stripped colors. Her name was Kenya, a country from the African District.

He watched intently as America talked to her for a moment, handing her his bag of food he had gotten from the restaurant. She took a moment to look through it, a smile clearly on her face. She set the bag down and quickly gave America a tight hug, burying her face in his stomach. Russia blinked when the situation hit him and what America had done.

Before he left her, America took Kenya to a stand and pointed to what looked like a water bottle. She raised up her fingers, seemingly giving him the number of what bottles she needed. America bought them for her, helped her fit them in what looked like a book bag that was on her back, and gave her one last hug. Kenya waved bye to him as she ran off out of view.

America stood in place, hands on his hips, and watching Kenya leave. She was growing slightly older, aging slowly compared to countries that were around after her. At home, he knew her family and the other countries would be happy to have some easy food and some purified water. He had gone to their district and helped build a water well of sorts so they didn't have to travel and risk their lives for water, but sometimes that wasn't enough. So he, and a few other countries, try to help them out the best they could. Seeing them happy was an indescribable feeling, one that brought tears to the eyes.

"Anyways," America said when he walked back to Russia. "How about that movie?"

Russia looked at him then to where Kenya stood prior. He smiled down at America, a sweet smile that America was caught off guard by. His heart skipped a beat and he blushed slightly, only stopping when his hair was ruffled by Russia's large hand.

"Look whos not as selfish as I zought," Russia chuckled, watching America try to fix his hair.

"Oh? Me? Not selfish? I wonder what gave you such a thought." America joked in a voice that made him sound sincere. He began to walk down the street, Russia rolling his eyes and following.

"I didn't know you helped zem out."

"Oh. Yeah. Well, I try to help out. Lately, they have been managing on their own, but it's nice to try to help out. Ya' know?"

Russia saw America look up at him with an innocent and true smile. He had given Russia knew kitchen supplies before, which he and Belarus were happy about. It was small things at first since Russia

didn't want to be sort of in debt with America of all countries. But then he just kept giving them things that he saw were broken or outdated. He never seemed to expect anything for it.

He wondered why he would act as if he never did anything like that for other countries.

Unfortunately for Russia's plans, the theater wasn't open when he and America walked to it. He was bummed out a little bit, hoping that the dark and distraction of a movie would ward off any nosy countries that could be inside so he could display some form of affection towards America. But that apparently wasn't happening.

And the theater being closed also ruined another country's plan.

Japan, being the stalker and partnered with Poland, knew that Russia would be taking America out on a date today. She was hoping to take notes (fewer pictures as heavily instructed by Germany) and give Poland updates on how the date went. So far, so good.

She knew she had to stay back, Russia can sniff out spy's easier than she had originally thought. The risk was exhilarating to her, albeit concerning.

So since the theater was unavailable, a thing Russia had never thought to check, America suggested they could look at the shops. Dragging Russia around like a puppy, he loved to do it.

"Look at this!" America called over to Russia, who was busy looking at jackets. In his hands, he held a small stuffed bear that had on a stitched smile and button eyes.

"The bearrr?" Russia asked, standing behind him. He was close, his scarf brushing against America's hair and he swore he could see a shadow being cast down onto him. God, he was big.

"Yeah look at him!" He turned to show off the stuffed animal to Russia, beaming a bright smile up at him. With him so close and looking up at him with such a big smile, Russia's heart skipped a beat and he took a step back.

Russia looked at the bear, it looking brand new but an old style for a modern teddy bear. Beyond that, it was cute. Small with short curly fur.

"Isn't he just the cutest?"

"Did you–" Russia scratched his neck "–vant him?"

"I don't think I have enough room for another stuffed animal." America laughed, as if that would ever stop him, and turned around to gently set the bear back in its place. He was adorable and he did want him, but he used the money he had brought with him for the food. He had a dollar and change on him, not enough for it, unfortunately. And he was not going to ask Russia to buy it for him, no matter how tempting that was.

"Besides I don't want you spending your money on me. You wanna go look around some other shops? I heard China has some new stuff he's selling."

Russia watched America start to maneuver around the stands that held some merchandise and products before looking back at the bear. He was small enough, perhaps he could do it.

"Amerrrica, vait up."

The named country paused in his place, turning around to see Russia leaving the store. He probably saw something that caught his eye and stopped to look at it, America thought to himself to explain why Russia took an extra second. He was looking at a nice blue sweater before, perhaps he could come back and buy it for him.

Russia started leading them down the street, hands in his jacket pockets. He looked down at America, who was talking about this new thing he should try out. It was some gaming council or game, that is the topic he knew he was talking about. He could only think about the bear that was in his pocket.

Maybe he could give it to him later? Or now, while it's still in his head. Or what if it would be better to give it to him as sort of a surprise? That sounds good, like something Poland would suggest.

But when should he? That was the problem.

They went around and checked out a few more shops, just browsing while Russia struggled to find ways to give America the bear. Maybe he could wait until they sat down? But it was getting late, and he wanted to take him to the park. Should he do it then?

Poland would know.

Would it be rude to call him? Would America find it rude? What if he doesn't answer, what then?

Why the fuck was this hard?

Getting Ukraine to agree with him was a lot easier than this.

"Yo, Russia?"

Russia shook his head and looked over at America. He raised a brow at him, his face deep with concern. They had sat down on a bench to take a break from walking, America taking the moment to answer a few texts he had gotten. The silence allowed Russia to go deep into thought, his hand rubbing the fur of the teddy bear.

"You okay? You've been really quiet, and spacing out a lot."

America leaned over to get a little closer and Russia's face flushed red again. "I'm fine," he objected, his voice straining a little bit. "Just a little tirrred, didn't get much sleep last night, you know?"

He didn't believe him, judging by his lips slightly tightening as he no doubt squinted behind his glasses. Russia, knowing full well he was not going to tell America he was panicking because this was a date, decided instead to stand up and stretch out his arms and legs.

"Did you vant to go to the parrrk? Ve kan just sit zerrre and hang arrround some. Grrrab some food to take vith us frrrom somewherrre."

Noting his dodgy behavior, America nodded along with Russia's idea hoping that some alone time with him at the park would get him to open up.

As they walked down the street side by side, Russia suggesting places to get food, Japan slowly stalked them. She got an idea in her head, one that would work perfectly with how Russia has reacted with America. She glanced around the street, hoping to spot a country that would help her. Phil, yeah he would but he would be the worst country to do that. Oh, Peru maybe.

"Well, if we do McDonald's, I'll pinky promise that I will not complain for the rest of the day," America held out his pinky, stepping in front of Russia so he had to stop walking. Russia looked down at him, his extended pinky, and sighed.

"Fine ve kan get yourrr McDonalds," Russia wrapped his pinky around America's and shook it slightly.

"Fuck yes!"

Peru spotted America-it was easy after his loud outburst-and started walking down the street, acting casual. When he got close to him, he looked him up and down and cat-called him.

"Looking great, Ame~," He winked at him and walked away, not waiting for a response. Further down the street, he saw Japan talking on the phone, turning a corner. He knew to follow her out of sight to make sure Russia didn't see them together. Whatever reason, he didn't know, but why would he argue if it got him a few bucks.

Russia glared at Peru as he was walking away, grabbing America's shoulder and pulling him closer to himself. No one should make advancements towards his America, any and everyone can fuck right off. Maybe he should give him his coat to make sure no one else whistles at him.

"Ruski, dude, it's fine, he's not going to do anything, " America looked up at Russia, seeing him glare at the country that just passed them. His arm wrapped around him firmly, pressing him up against Russia felt so nice and welcoming, it made America's stomach flutter with butterflies.

Russia didn't answer and instead just kept his firm hold on America,

eyeing any other country that was on the street.

"You know, if you just wanted to hold me this close, " America grabbed Russia's hand that was set firmly on his shoulder and held it so he would have his arm around him. "You could have just asked."

Russia blinked his threatening stare away and instead focused on how he was actually holding America. He blushed slightly, thanking for the coloration of his flag that slightly masked it. He did like holding him like this, America holding his hand too.

He just smiled and said, "so McDonald's huh?"

The two walked to the fast-food restaurant and ordered food, America bouncing up and down about his "nuggies" as he called them. Russia, accustomed to his weird behavior, just let it happen and actually smiled at him acting like a dork. Seeing him tap his feet and waiting impatiently for his food amused him. It reminded him of when America would pretend to pout when Russia was cooking something and wouldn't let him taste it, or when he didn't let him know whatever Kaz and Bel were saying when they teased him about America.

"What did you want?"

Russia blinked as he realized he had forgotten his rehearsed order.

"Same zing as you, " Russia improvised as if that was what he wanted all along. America had caught him off guard again and he forgot what he even wanted in the first place.

"Make that a double then, " America said to the country working there. It was the Netherlands at the register, eating some of the fries. He offered one to America and he happily took it. They both knew he shouldn't be doing that, much less eating while working, but no one at the moment really cared. Plus America does it all the time.

Jamaica handed them each their food in there to-go bags and hurried back to the drive-through window.

"You know, if you don't finish your nuggies I certainly will."

"You act like I don't know zat, " Russia joked. "You verrre only dancing about zem inside."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. They are really good, fight me."

"Maybe later."

It wasn't too much of an eventful walk to the park, but one filled with America asking Russia about his recent trips into the woods. Russia had gone back in once or twice hoping to find something, but ultimately was left with the same thing every time; nothing.

"Just explorrring, you know? I like to challenge myself, " he lied about his true intentions once more. No one knew the truth about it, the only country who possibly could was Vietnam. He had only led him back to the original entryway of the forest the first time, calling him crazy for wanting to go back there.

But that couldn't have been enough to warrant suspicion.

"I'd still be careful, " America warned through his chews. "Weird stuff happens in those woods."

"Any you kan rrremember?" Russia asked, his eyebrow raised. He watched America's actions carefully to see if he would tense up as he had done countless times. Sure this was the first time in a while he had brought it back up, only cause of the distress he saw America have over it. This time however was different.

America had only shrugged. Casually, too. "Nah, not really. I mean, some creepy spooky feelings and shit, but nothing much."

His response worried Russia. But he knew enough then to push further.

It was a cooler evening, the sun setting over the trees that lined the park and it's many paths. The fleeting rays of sun tinted the green leaves creating a golden outline that dimmed to a darker almost maroon coloring, framed with the whisps of clouds that warned of possible rain in the upcoming days. The flowers in the gardens had

started to close and tuck themselves away for the night, along with the day's animals and creatures. There was still a little bit of time before the stone and paved paths' lights turned on, so with the dimmed scenery, it slowed time and any sense of rush.

Just stop and breathe, it seemed to say. Rest for a while.

It was exactly what Russia intended to do. Well. In theory.

"Hey, so I vas vonderrring if you just vanted to go forrr a valk down one of the paths and go sit forrr a while. Vatch the sunset and shit." Russia relaxed his expression and slouched his shoulders to put off the vibes that he didn't care or was just suggesting things off the fly.

America smiled at him and nodded. "Yeah totally, it'd be such fun. Almost like a romantic night together.~"

Thank God for the shadows of the trees, they were able to hide Russia's blushing as he looked away. Oh God, could he have figured it out? I mean, it's not like he wasn't opposed to him knowing, he just didn't want everything to happen too fast. And America, he would immediately become extra and he would rather not have that, it seemed. . . scary.

"Yeah yeah, I meant just so ve have a place to eat vithout anyone botherrring us and have a nice view, too."

"Uh-huh, suuuure."

"I vill slap you."

"Oh, daddy, please~."

Russia stomped ahead, his face practically steaming.

"Russia, wait, " America called after him while laughing. Understandably, Russia didn't listen and America had to run to catch up with him and his stupid long ass legs. He smiled to himself, proud of what he said and kind of confirming a little suspicion that Russia totally has a daddy kink. Oh, he is gonna have fun with that.

Fun that Russia does not want right now. It was bad enough he was so anxious about today, then America had to go and be. . . well, America! Which, he should have taken account of, but hindsight is 2020. Still, it didn't help his case at all.

"You done being gay?"

"I dunno, you done being in denial?"

Another deep sigh from Russia and a snicker from America.

"Okay, okay, I'll stop this time, I promise."

Russia shook his head slightly, frustrated with him but still managed to smile. "You better, orrr I will never buy you McDonald's again."

America gasped, "you wouldn't."

"Oh, I would."

The two laughed, helping which helped with Russia's anxiety. He was still trying to think of the best time to give him the stuffed bear that is still in his pocket. He could feel it every time his leg brushed against the pocket each time he took a step. Maybe he could give it to him when they walk back to his house? Or when they sit down?

The overhead lights flickered on, casting a warm yellow glow on the pavement. With the now lit path, Japan froze in her place. She was well behind the two but was still in the middle of the path. Quickly she ducked down low and snuck into the bushes.

"That was close," she whispered to herself. She had been using the cover of the sunset to follow them, sneaking as quietly as a cat in a dark alley. But she might have to be more careful now that she's around things that can make noise and give her position away.

Russia looked around the path to make sure no one was in sight of them before he casually took America's hand. He tried not to show much emotion on his face, only feeling a slight blush on his cheeks. America on the other hand smiled and swung their hands back and forth a little, an extra bounce in his step.

"Hey, let's go up herrre," Russia said as they stopped walking, looking towards the hill that had a bench under a tree. He knew from there they would have a good view of the setting sun and the night sky that came with it. There where trees that encased the hill, creating a small barrier around it, adding to its feeling of seclusion. Seclusion was good. That way Russia could make sure no one can see him with Russia in this setting.

"Alright, finally we can sit down and finish eating," America lead them off the path and onto the grass. The two hand in hand walked up to the bench and took a seat, America eyeing the bushes that were nearby. For a moment he wanted to check to see if they had any berries but realized that it wasn't the season for them yet. Plus he has some fries he needs to finish.

"Hey, arrren't you kold?"

"Hm? Oh uh, not really, I'm fine."

Russia looked down at what America was wearing once again, something he had actively been trying to avoid, and offered, "vell, if you get kold I kan give you my jacket, if you vant."

"Oh, nevermind I'm freezing." America rubbed his arms and shivered, even going as far as saying, "burr, I'm so-so-so-so cold."

Russia rolled his eyes but still slid off his jacket for him. It wasn't that cold of a night, but after America's nearly getting bad frostbite, it was reasonable for his skin to still be sensitive to the cold even after a few months.

The sudden thought of him running away in the freezing tundra made him wince.

But seeing him in front of him trying to fix the oversized jacket calmed him.

"Why do you have to be such a giant, I'll never be able to steal your clothes and have them fit," America complained, even though he has Russia's brown sweater still, laying on his bed actually. He is thinking about giving it back to him only cause the smell of his

cologne is fading from it. Then he'll steal it right back.

"You'rrre not stealing any morrre of my clothes."

"That's what you think," America winked at him and Russia rolled his eyes again. He popped up the collar a bit and rolled up the sleeves so he could fish out the rest of his food from the paper bag. They both took that time to finish eating, simply watching the last bit of the sun's rays fading away in comfortable silence.

From the hillside view they had, they could see part of the European district, the street lights and shop lights getting brighter as it's competing light grew dimmer. Even though they could see the small town, it was too far away for countries to be recognizable and the bench itself would soon be shrouded in darkness. No one could see them, Russia reminded himself.

At least the light of the moon would allow them to see each other. It wasn't a full moon, which would have been preferable, but at least it was something.

"So, why did you really want to sit here?" America asked, putting the empty containers in his bag and pushing that aside.

Russia raised a brow at him and shrugged. "I don't know. It's farrr avay frrrom people, and my feet arrre tirrred."

"Uh-huh," America hummed and leaned closer to him, Russia tensing up quickly. He smiled and set his hand on Russia's knee, speaking lowly, "You sure you didn't want the seclusion for something else?~"

"I-I'm surrre," Russia gulped and tried to think of a scapegoat. "Uh, actually, I do have something to show you."

"Oh yeah, what's that?~"

"In my jacket."

America raised a brow, dropping his flirtatious manner for a second to check what he was talking about. He patted both pockets before feeling something kind of soft in the left one. "What's this?" he

asked as he pulled out the stuffed bear. It took him a moment but America recognized the bear and he paused.

"I know you said you vouldn't have rrroom forrr him, but I saw zat you did vant him." Russia rubbed the back of his neck, his face feeling warm and his stomach doing flips. He couldn't bring himself to look up from his lap to see if America had smiled at it, or frowned at it, or even did anything towards it. Did he like it? Did he hate it? Why couldn't he look up to see his expression?

"I love him!" America beamed, causing Russia to look up surprised.

"You do?"

"Yeah, I can't believe you got him for me." America smiled and admired the bear, ruffling his fur and brushing it to fit more with the shape of the stuffed animal. "Not that I'm not grateful, but I told you not to buy anything for me."

"I didn't."

"What do you mean?" America raised a brow before gasping. "You stole him!"

He hit Russia's arm and Russia yelled in surprise. "What, I did what you said. I didn't buy him."

"You know you can get in trouble for that."

"I know." Russia smiled but frowned when he asked, "but if you vant me to, I kan take him back."

"No, he's mine now."

America wrapped his arms around the bear and held him close to his chest, trying to curl around it as he would with a bigger stuffed animal. He looked adorable like that, rubbing his cheek against the fur and humming to himself. Russia couldn't help but smile at him, his shoulders relaxing but his heart beating faster. He was cute in his jacket, his little smile, and the moonlight that light up the white on his skin. There was a faint glow from the artificial lights on his glasses and Russia found himself wanting to take those off to gaze

into his eyes again.

Instead, Russia turned himself away and looked up at the night sky. The sky was a dark blue, but somewhat lighter where the sun had previously been. Stars dotted the sky, twinkling, and creating patterns that were different to each culture who had seen them. It was mesmerizing, a sight he has shared with America on more than one occasion. They both where a fan of seeing the stars, imagining what it would be like to be among them gazing down at their world below them.

A shiver from America caught his attention and he looked down to see him bringing the sides of the jacket closer to him. Why he didn't just simply zipper up, Russia didn't know. Not really caring, Russia put his arm around America and pulled him closer. A little surprised at first, America looked up at Russia but then adjusted himself so he could lean against him, allowing Russia to hold him closer.

"Hey, would it totally ruin the moment if I ask if you have any nuggies left over?"

Russia laughed, quickly covering his mouth to hold it back. "I have a few frrries leftover."

"I'll eat those gimmie gimmie," America bounced up and down, reaching across Russia to grab his bag. From the weight of it there wasn't a lot of food leftover, but still some. And the fries at McDonald's are arguably the best thing about it.

"You act like child," Russia shook his head at America who was trying to find any of the fries that could possibly be at the bottom of the bag.

"Eh you love it," America winked at him but then paused when he realized he couldn't tell. "I'm winking under my glasses."

Russia watched him finish off the few fries that were in the bag with his focus on his glasses. Maybe he could. They were all alone after all, no one can see them from where they where. It would be safe. That's if he was comfortable with it.

America crumpled up the bag and stuffed Russia's inside of his own. There was a trash bin somewhere along the path, he could throw it away there. He may have skipped a few of his environmental classes, but he knew enough to know that litter is bad and that the bigger companies that make the trash blamed the population for it and coined the term 'Litter Bug' to shift the blame off of them. See, he knows a few things.

When he looked up to ask Russia something along the lines of that, he stopped when he saw that he was already staring at him. His brow was narrowed slightly in focus. his lips pulled back to that of concentration. He lifted his hands slowly as if debating on if he should do something or not.

America really hoped he would lift up his chin and kiss him right there.

Russia instead slowly lifted the sides of America's glasses.

"Wait," he set his hands on top of Russia's to halt him. "What if someone sees?"

"Nyet one vill," Russia comforted and looked around them again to double-check. "I prrromise."

It took him a moment, but America took a deep breath and let go of Russia's hands. He slid the glasses off of him to see America holding his eyes closed. He was really nervous, never taking off his glasses in public and only in the comfort of Russia's house or his own room.

"It's safe," Russia rubbed his thumb against his cheek, slowly moving his hands to cup his face. He wanted to see his eyes again, gaze into that deep onyx, try and see what else could be hidden in the black and just become memorized by them.

With the slightest of movement, America nodded his head. Cautiously, he lifted his eyelids and looked up at Russia. Without his shades he could see Russia better in the moonlight, seeing his eyes just widen slightly with the very corners of his mouth tugging upwards as if he wanted to smile but was holding it back. His own iris's were almost an amber, a radiating sun that glowed and

warmed up America better than any jacket. The amber, it reminded him of the warm suns rays, the flames of a fire, a hunger to be alive and fight. But then when they were blue, that amazing turquoise, he was reminded of the stone in long-forgotten childhood gifts that were decorated with it. Such a lost and forgotten feeling that he found in them, one he never knew he wanted again until he allowed himself to just breathe and focus on the sight in front of him.

He envied Russia as much as he appreciated and loved him. His eyes, when they change they change to be captivating. He loved his eyes. But when America's eyes changed long ago, they became horrifying and void of anything.

But that's not what Russia saw. No, what he did, it was far better.

Russia saw the whole universe in America's eyes.

For a moment, he forgot to breathe. In the deep blackness that brought so much pain and fear to America, they reflected the whole of the night sky back to Russia. The sheer emptiness of it held each star in the sky in a perfect reflection, bringing that night sky that Russia longed to touch right in front of him. There it was. Every night Russia sat alone looking at the stars from a kid to now, the pure joy and ecstasy were held at that moment. Every chance he had to wonder about the possibility of other worlds, of travel between each bright and shinning light he saw, every feeling that brought him peace and solitude was caught in that small space between them.

It was beautiful. If America could see what his eyes could hold, see that the very universe could shine bright in his eyes, then maybe he wouldn't be scared of them. If only he could see what Russia sees.

They didn't speak. They just held each other, gazing and transfixed on each other's seeing what they each desired in them. America saw the light, saw a warm hope, saw an ever-changing future that was still filled with color and light. Russia saw the chance of having something beautiful even in the midst of nothing but darkness.

America set his hand on Russia's shoulder and one on his thigh as he slowly leaned closer. Russia didn't even notice at first. All he saw

was the vibrant sky coming closer to him as if it were trying to bring him closer to the heavens.

It was when America slowly closed his eyes did he notice what was happening. He had been pulling America closer to him, not even registering in his head that he was until then. In a moment of panic, he didn't know what to do, seeing as America was moving in for a kiss. He was barely a hand's width away and Russia did the only thing he could think of to at that moment.

Russia grabbed America and pulled him into a tight hug.

America's eyes fluttered open and he had blinked a few times to recognize what was happening. His lips weren't on Russia's what the hell was this bullshit?

"It's a little late, I don't vant you to get in trrrouble vith yourrr father," Russia said as he pulled away from the hug, his face buzzing with warmth. "I kan walk you home."

America sighed and agreed.

Maybe he got first kiss jitters? He probably hasn't ever kissed anyone before, of course, it was scary for him. He just really wished he could have done it. But if Russia isn't ready, then Russia isn't ready. And besides, he can always wait until he is.

Even if it's starting to hurt.

**Aaaaaand we're back baby! Ha ah, how has it been everyone, how are you all doing? Wattpad really did try to tell me to get a life when it deleted my book huh? Like I'd listen to it. Having a life is overrated I'd rather adopt a penguin and live in the middle of the woods in cabin with my girlfriend. Like the lesbian I am. Either way, they went on a date! As if America didn't know, come on Russia he isn't stupid. Why else would he get all dressed up huh? Such a dumb gay.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Escape Cabin

**Narrator's POV**

"Amaerica playse stawp ih'!"

Australia stood over his said brother, trying to steady him as he thrashed. His wrists and ankles were tied down, a padded strap across his chest to help further restrain him. He had burned and bruised his wrists with the last rope so they made him cuffs for more comfort, padded with stuffing to not injure him further. He looked like a patient in a horror movie's mental hospital.

America's voice screamed in a forgotten language, crying out in words foreign to Australia's ears. His mouth was stained with the dried black substance, creating lines down to his throat and sides of his face. He had stopped throwing up and was now only left in hysterical screaming.

America raised his chest in the air suddenly, causing Australia to flinch. He was only trying to break free of the restraints, he reminded himself. He sat back down in America's desk chair and hugged his chest. He really didn't want to be there, he really didn't want to just sit by and watch his brother suffer and scream until his vocals were practically torn to shreds.

Last time he was left unsupervised, America had gotten free and had tried to make it for the front door. He screamed at them in another unknown language, trying to get past them. He was clearly willing to do anything to get out, attacking Canada with his utility knife and almost stabbing him. Zee managed to tackle America and that's where they were able to restrain him again.

"America, playse, " Australia rubbed his eyes and tried to hold back his tears. "Playse, stawp."

Outside the bedroom, the screaming was barely muffled. Britain and France were waiting outside the door, waiting for it all to stop

so they can release their son.

Britain clutched his cane with tight fists, holding it close to his chest. His eyes were shut tight and his lips spread needle-thin. He was trying his best to try and ignore the obvious, what could one do when their child suffering and they can't do anything about it?

France was doing her best to console her husband, resting her head on his shoulder and rubbing her hand on his arm. She knew she couldn't do much to better the situation, the only thing she could do was make sure he didn't wait alone.

"What are we to do?"

Britain peaked open his eyes to look down at her.

"I don't know. What can we do?"

"We can tell 'im what we know."

"You know we can't do that." Britain shot down the idea quickly, lowering his cane and trying to straighten out any fear he might have been showing. "You know what it'll do to him."

"Non, " France's tone dropped. "We *thin*k wé know what eet *might* do to 'im."

Britain sighed and lowered his head. For a moment all that there was is America's screams.

"We can't. If he's managed to forget, than perhaps it's a good thing, " Britain reminded her of their past conversations. "You know what he had done to them. He was the worst of us, of course, he'd want to forget."

"Hon, ai know what you went through zen was 'airribuhl (horrible), but you steehl remember what you'ave done ét made yurself bettair. Why must we stop 'im from doing la sam?" France protested, flinching when America yelled angrily.

"Everything is oh-kai!" Australia yelled, knowing that his parents were outside the door guarding it in case he managed to get past

him.

"France, the troubled past does not need to be tampered with, " Britain stood his ground, walking away from the door a little to pace around some. "America and I have a good standing with each other right now. Even if we do argue, it's the best it's ever been."

"Pairhaps, maibe we can seek zumetheng médical? I'm suré WHO can 'elp us, shé 'as to know zumetheng zat weehl."

"No, nothing like that will. It hasn't helped before, it won't start now."

The two stood in silence, France rubbing her hands together to try and think of something. Anything that she had offered has been shut down almost immediately. Any sort of reason, anyway she could imagine helping their poor child was disregarded. She loved her husband, honest, but it was times like these she really wanted to smack some sense into him.

Britain on the other hand, unbeknownst to France's knowledge, had already tried a number of things she had suggested. Long before they had gotten together. It was a failure after failure after failure. Britain can only take so much failure.

"Maybe we can try something else."

"What else eez zére to do?"

"I don't know, " he thought some more. "Magic or something other?"

"Eez zere anytheng magic can evén do haire?"

Britain walked to the hanging portraits of his family, dated centuries ago. There were many of them like this, progressively getting younger with more current portraits. They were all through the bedroom wing, showing how Britain grew more with each country that joined in to raise him. He was the child of a unification, after all, children like that tend to be more powerful and strong. Perhaps there could be something he could do. Some power he could have lying dormant inside of him.

Some lessons, some old teaching he had long forgotten. Maybe even in the stories that came from his parents. His mother, England, she might have an idea. Or perhaps Wales could provide some assistance as well.

"We can find something. I will not let my son suffer any longer." Britain then began to march down the hallway, heading towards the other wing. "Guard the door, I have to find something!"

France stood there confused and, seemingly being left no choice, decided to stand by and guard the door. America had not let up on his screaming in the slightest. One could even hear the bed itself shake as he thrashed and fought his restraints. It was horrible to see him tied down in a straight jacket form.

What was even more horrible was the words he was saying. And Canada heard every bit of it.

"Dasgyenöwö's! Agé'ne:gëh dasgyenöwö's! (Help me! Please help me!)"

Canada was in his room, his back against the door. He was dressed to sleep, or at least getting ready for sleep when America had his episode. Still in his PJ's and robe, Canada held his hands over his mouth as tears rolled down from his wide eyes. His eyepatch was off and laying on the nightstand, ready for him when he woke.

"Dasgyenöwö's! Ëyákiyá'dage:ha'! Hënö'wë:da's!  Dasgyenöwö's! Agé'ne:gëh! Dasgyenöwö'a! Ëyákiyá'dage:ha' agé'ne:gëh, hënö'wë:da's! (Help me! We have to save them! They're dying! Help me! Please, someone! Help me! We have to save them, please, they'll die!)"

Canada choked on his tears and tried to tune his brother out, but he couldn't. He was frozen in shock and fear, hearing his brother. Listening to the words he screamed. *Understanding* them.

"Agíe:yös! Age'ne:gëh, da'age:yös! Nó'yëh! Ga:weh ëhsáhdë:di', age'ne:gëh da'agadadë:öh! Da'age:yös! (I'm dying please! Please I don't want to die! Mom! Where are you, please don't leave me! I don't want to die!)"

Canada understood every word that came out of America's mouth.

Every.

Single.

One.

Every cry for help, every scream of pain, every beg to be freed, every warning, every plea, pain, anger, sadness, everything. Canada understood it all.

But America isn't speaking English. He knew that.

"Ësa:ayö', sadáhset, desë:hda:t! ësnidzagö:'! Dasgyenöwö's ëyákiyá'dage:ha, De'dewagadë:dzo:nih hënö'wë:da's. Da'age:yös! (He's coming, hide, run, anything just please! Help me save them, I don't want them to die! I don't want to die!)"

Canada covered his ears to drown out his voice, trying to keep the voice muffled and unintelligible. He wanted to go back to not being able to understand, he wanted to be in ignorant bliss once again, anything but this. He hadn't been able to understand him before, not like he did now. It frightened him. It made his entire body trembled, his lip quiver and his mouth go from a deep pained frown to mouthing the words "shut up, " or "stop it". He grasped at his hair, trying to distract himself even if it had to be with pain. Tears poured from his eyes, his gasping for breath becoming more difficult.

It felt like nothing would ever end this endless circle of hell.

Until Canada heard a knock on a window.

He looked up towards the sliding glass doors that lead to a balcony to see Kazakhstan on the other side of it. It was sprinkling, common weather there, and he looked a little damp. He lifted his goggles and waved a hello when he saw Canada turned to him. He was smiling at him but then his expression dropped when he noticed Canada was crying.

He opened the door and stood there ready to come inside and

asked, "what is wrong?"

Canada lept up and ran to the door, practically jumping into Kaz's arms. He buried his face in his chest, holding him close and bawling. Kaz was surprised, momentarily frozen and unsure what to do.

He looked up towards the bedroom door when he heard the screaming. He recognized what sounded like America yelling mixed in with another of Canada's brothers, Australia, or New Zeland he wasn't too sure. It didn't matter. What did matter was getting Canada away from here.

He lowered his goggles, wrapped around Canada tighter, and launched himself into the air. His great golden wings propelled them off the deck and into the sky. It was kind of a cool night, a few scattered clouds that blocked the night sky and made way for a dim moon.

Not the safest time to be out flying but Kazakhstan had really wanted to see Canada and he did tell him he could come over anytime. He knew enough not to come over at night, but Ukraine and Russia had been fighting as well so he really wanted to leave his house too.

"Where are we going!" Canada yelled over the wind, holding onto Kaz for dear life.

"Anywhere!"

After a moment, Canada answered, "take me to my cabin please!"

Kaz nodded and change his course to go northeast. The wind was cold, nibbling at their skins but they were both used to the cold, Canada more so. What they weren't used to was the silence between them. Whenever Kaz visited or Can visited, it was always a whirlwind of conversations. Either one to help Kaz practice English, ones to help Can learn a few words and phrases, or just ones that they wanted to have.

There was always something.

And now. Canada was okay with the silence. It was better than the screaming.

When the clouds became thicker and darker, Kaz flew lower to the ground, just enough to be a good distance above the trees. He'd hate to fly right into one and impale himself on a branch. The number of times he's had nightmares like that and intrusive thoughts that came out of nowhere made him naturally uneasy around trees when flying.

The landscape had changed, turning into a forest with thick pines and other varients of furr trees. They were definitely in the North American District, the northern part of it for sure. Snow dotted and blanketed most of the trees, as well as the ground beneath, even though it wasn't winter yet. They had to be close to Canada's cabin since it's more often than not always covered in snow.

The temperature had dropped significantly and Kaz could feel what was supposed to be light snow stabbing his exposed skin. Even his wings felt the toll of the cold, slowly stiffening. His jacket did some to help cover him, as well as his traditional styles hat but his wings were still left exposed.

Canada peeked through squinted eyes to see if they were close to his cabin. By the looks of the terrain and some notable paths, he had to be somewhere close. But in all honesty, he couldn't tell, he's hasn't really seen his land from an aerial view like this before.

A bright light shown next to him, almost binding him. He looked up to see Kaz's feathers slowly start to glow and light up a golden color. Canada's eye's widened at the sight, his mouth hanging open. He's seen Kaz's wings glow one other time, something Kaz was nervous to show him and had only done it to look around under his bed.

It was amazing, and the light made everything else around Canada so much darker. But another thing he felt was warmth. As the glow of Kaz's wings grew stronger so did the warming sensation from it. The cold was muddled, so much colder now on his back but nice on his hands.

It only took Kaz another ten minutes to find the cabin, and by then the glow from his wings had dimmed significantly.

"Kaz, careful!" Canada winced when he thought a tree got too close. In all honesty, it was pretty close, but Kaz knew what he was doing. He really wanted to get inside to cause the cold air had retaken their previous hold on Kaz and made his wings start to stiffen, along with his fingers.

"Get ready, " Kaz warned as he got ready to land. Canada was taller than him, so it would be an awkward land but if they fell or stumbled a bit the snow should cushion their landing.

When they did land, Canada realized his slippers where gone. The snow stung his feet a bit and he gasped at the sudden cold.

"You okay?" Kaz took off his goggles and looked Can up and down to make sure there were no obvious wounds. What if he did hit that tree and didn't realize it? Or what if he had a bruise from something else?

"Yeah, my slippers are gone. They must have fallen off during the flight, or when we left, " Canada brushed off some of the snow off of himself and Kaz. "Let's just get inside."

No complaints or objections from Kaz, Canada hurried to his front door and brushed off the welcome mat, taking the key from under it. When they got inside it was dark and a little cold, but much warmer compared to the outside.

Canada went to turn the heat on, leaving Kaz in the entrance to take off his jacket and shoes.

Kazakhstan really liked the cabin and had visited without Canada one other time. He knew where the key was and actually even had a spare key himself that Can had given him. He was allowed to come anytime he needed a getaway from whatever, but he just had to tell him whenever he did so.

It was small, cozy, and just a little bigger than a shack. It had two rooms, the sitting room connecting with the kitchen, only being

divide by the doorway to the bedroom, which had the conjoining bathroom. It was big enough for maybe two people the most, maybe three or four if you put the mattress on the floor in the sitting room and moved the couch a bit. There was a stone fireplace that held a stone mantel decorated with family photos and little trinkets Canada had collected surrounded by two oak bookshelves filled with different genres. There were two windows, one by the door and in the bedroom, covered with dark red curtains, making the cabin seem so much smaller.

Kaz made sure most of the snow was off of him before he walked around to get his blood pumping faster. He looked around, trying to see if anything had really changed from his last visit. The kitchen still looked normal, small sink, small fridge, and a few cupboards, and a two-person table towards the wall by the front door.

"Hey, I think there's something wrong with the heating I'll have to fix," Canada said, brushing aside the bed sheet that was used as a door to the bedroom. Kaz looked up, seeing that he had shed the robe and even changed into different bulkier pj's. "Did you want a change of clothes, they'll be warmer than those ones."

Kaz nodded and followed Canada into the bedroom where he pulled out an extra set of pj's for him.

"Might be big on you, but you can roll up the sleeves and pant legs if you need to, right?"

Kaz nodded and said, "thank you. I can do it if I need to."

"I'm going to start the fire, then, " Canada patted Kaz's shoulder before leaving. Even with that small friendly gesture, Kaz smiled wildly and enjoyed the feeling of the small butterflies in his stomach.

Canada's clothes where big, but he had a problem with the shirt. There were no adjustments in the back for wings,  something that Kaz has grown so accustomed to having he forgot to address it with him.

He didn't want to cut his shirt. Maybe he could wear his original

shirt, but he really wanted to wear Canada's clothes. Maybe if he wore it backward, and buttoned it up from the back he could? Yeah, he could do that.

"Did you want me to make you some cocoa?" Canada asked from the kitchen, raising his voice just a little.

"Da! Oh. Yeah!" Kaz called back, struggling with the buttons. He couldn't get the very top one, and the shoulders were a little tight from being worn the opposite way.

When he left the bedroom, just giving up on the top button completely, he carried his clothes out with him to sit by the fire as Canada had done with his. He hoped Can wouldn't notice right away what he had to do with his shirt just for embarrassment's sake.

"Okay, it'll be a little while." Canada walked over to Kaz to sit by the fire and suddenly Kaz got reminded of the mini daydream he had of this situation where they kissed.

His cheeks buzzed a little at the thought and body went for a loop in the sky, too.

"Thank you."

Kaz looked up at Can, seeing the light of the flames dancing on his face, the shadows mimicking the movements. His lips, one of the first things Kaz looks to, were in a frown and his eyes looked distant.

"You are welcome." Kaz nodded, a worried expression on his face. He wanted to reach out and hug Canada again, or wrap his arm around him, or even ask if he wanted to talk about it but felt that his mouth had been frozen shut by nervousness.

Before anything could be done, Canada shook his head to get away from the bad memories and replaced his frown with a smile.

"You do know you are wearing that backward, right?" He managed a small laugh in his voice.

Kaz nodded and rubbed the back of his neck. "I know. I need space for my wings, but your shirt didn't have any."

Canada leaned to look at Kaz's back and realized what he had meant. "Oh, I'm sorry. I completely forgot, I can cut some holes in it if you would like, " he offered, standing up to grab the scissors from the kitchen.

"No, it is okay. I don't want you to, um, " Kaz tapped his finger rapidly as he tried to remember the word. He knew it in his language of course, but he forgot the English one. "Um. Rrr. Stars with rrr."

"Ruin?"

"Yes, ruin! I don't want you to ruin your shirt."

Canada looked towards the drawer that had the scissors in them then back to Kaz. "That can't be comfortable, though. I can always sow it up if I want to."

Kaz thought about it but still didn't want Canada to do it. He would feel really bad, and plus even if he did cut holes it would be very difficult for him to try and fit his wings through them.

He told Canada that to the best of his English abilities and Canada decided that he was right.

"I can get you a tank top,  it might be easier, " Can offered again, walking towards his bedroom. "I might have a stretchy one so I don't have to cut it."

Kaz nodded, seeing how it was still Canada's clothes he would be wearing. He knew he was making the situation more complicated by wanting to do that, but he couldn't help himself. He wanted to be gay.

"Did you need help with those buttons?"

Kaz shrugged and stood up, leaning forward to try and reach for one of the buttons on his back, but his wing hit something and he froze when he heard it land on the ground.

"Sorry."

"It'd okay, it didn't break, it was just a wood carving. Let me help you." Canada waved off Kaz's worry and walked behind him, working to unbutton the shirt. It was so much easier, and the closest Kaz had ever gotten to being in a slightly suggestive position with him. Of course, the thought of that Kaz shoved away quickly shaking his head a little and brushing his hair aside.

Canada backed up, walking around Kaz's wings to grab his shirt back after Kaz pulled it off. When he did Can paused, stopping mid-step seeing Kaz's stomach. Along his side and chest, there was discoloration, what looked like a lightning strike or a burn mark that was bigger than the width of a stool seat.

"Whoa. Um, " Can swallow nervously. "What. What happened?"

Kaz looked up at him confused, his shirt extended to him. He hummed his confusion and looked down to see if there was something on him. He noticed his giant and very obvious scarring and clicked his tongue.

"Семипалатинск, " he said rubbing his side but urging Canada's shirt further. "Bomb testing. Bad explosions, I'm okay now."

When Canada still looked worried he smiled and walked over to him to give him a hug. "I'm okay now, it was a long time ago."

Canada hugged him back before leaving to get him the tank top. It did fit better, Kaz managing to squeeze his wings through the shirt and popping them out through the back. It helped with it being oversized on him and made from a material that did stretch. By the time all that had happened and was done with, their hot chocolate was ready.

Almost.

"Did you want marshmallows or whipped cream in yours?"

"Both!"

Canada laughed and did as he requested, bringing their mugs over

to the fire. The living room had warmed up a lot more, slowly but surely. He should probably grab some blankets from the bedroom, seeing how they might just end up sleeping out here. He'd have to make sure Kaz would be okay with that, after all, it must be difficult to sleep with his wings.

"Yeah, I sleep on my stomach, " Kaz answered when Canada asked. "I can use them for a cover, too."

"I can still give you a blanket if you want one."

"Um. Yeah. Can we stay together?" Kaz lowered his mug from his mouth, some whipped cream lining his upper lip and giving him a small white mustache. "I wanna know you are okay."

"Yeah, we can. I'll just extend the couch, " Canada smiled at him, wanting to laugh at Kaz for the small mustache but holding back for now. He needed to get their blankets and sleeping spots sort out.

He did feel horrible for abandoning his brother.

At least that's what it felt like he did. America was having an episode and Canada ran away. He should have just stayed there and helped him somehow instead of being a coward and jumping at the chance to flee. That's what brothers do, they help each other.

This was just like what he did in that forest. And what he continues to do the longer he withholds information from him. He wants to tell America what he knows, but. He knew how much it hurt him.

"No point in thinking about that right now, Canada, " he told himself as he stripped the bed of its blankets. "It's okay to want to get away from a bad situation, especially one I didn't have control over. This is better than letting myself suffer."

He checked the small closet for any extra blankets and pillows and grabbed what he could carry. The bigger heavier one dragged along the floor and Canada tried to pick it up but couldn't see where it was exactly to grab it. He reached out to try but decided to walk to the open doorway that leads to the bathroom to see if he could see it using the mirror.

"There it is, " he said once he managed to grab it and pull it to the top of the pile. He took a second glance at his reflection and screamed.

"Canada!" Kaz yelled as he ran to the bedroom. He hit his wing on the side of the doorframe and cried out from the pain, but ignored it to see what was wrong with Canada. There were a few blankets on the floor scattered all around the standing body of his friend.

"What is it?" He asked seeing how he looked fine from the back, no sign he was hurt. When he turned around he noticed his hand was covering his left eye.

"Is there something in your eye?" Kaz walked closer to move Canada's hand to see if there was anything in his eye. When he raised his hand and moved it to his face, Canada stumbled backward and trembled in fear.

"What is it? Are you scared?"

"My eye! I didn't have my patch on my eye, how could you not have seen it?"

Kaz tilted his head, thinking he meant about how his eye was inverted colors. Why would that make him cry out in pain, though?

"Your eye is black, yes? Is it hurt?" Kaz tried again to move to make sure nothing got in Canada's eye and was hurting him. He allowed Kaz to move his hand and inspect his eye, his heart racing as he did. First Mex, and now Kaz. He can't get lucky again, Kaz must be afraid, he has to be, the eye isn't normal. It isn't normal heterochromia either, it's unnatural. Scary.

And Kaz was just acting like nothing was wrong.

"You are okay?"

Canada slowly nodded his head.

"Okay! I can help you with blankets."

He watched him in stunned silence as he picked up the blankets and

tried to avoid hitting Canada with his wings.

"Aren't you scared?"

Kaz hummed in question and Canada explained further. "My eye? It's different, isn't that scary?"

"Nyet. Er, no. My eye is different!" Kaz smiled pointing to his golden-colored eye. Canada glanced back at his reflection, seeing the sheer darkness that surrounded his lightly greyed iris.

"But yours is pretty, mine is. . . dark."

"Dark is good." Kaz handed Canada a few blankets and began to pick up the rest. His blunt statement confused him and when Kaz noticed he explained further, "dark helps you see light. My wings can't glow in light, I need to have the dark."

Canada blinked a few times.

"In light, my wings aren't good, but in dark my wings are. Light looks better when you are in the dark, " Kaz began to wonder if he was using the right phrasing. Or the right words. He was confident he was, but then Canada's silence made him start to doubt himself.

"But. Didn't it scare you when I ran at you earlier?"

Kaz shrugged. "No. You were sad, that scared me."

He smiled and began to see if he could lead Canada out of the bedroom and back to the much warmer sitting room. He wanted to finish his hot chocolate and maybe ask him about why he was upset. See if he wanted to talk about it, that was.

"Will we sleep on couch?" Kaz asked looking at it, seeing that it wrapped around the wall a bit, creating enough space for two people to sleep on either side. He'd have to adjust himself to sleep comfortably with his wings but he'll manage.

"Uhh, yeah. Yeah we can, " Canada avoided eye contact and set the blankets and pillows he carries to the couch while Kaz followed behind him to do the same. He glanced over momentarily and

noticed that Kaz was looking at him. From the angle he was standing at he couldn't see his blackened eye.

"Are you okay?"

"Um, " Canada rubbed his arm and kept his body positioned slightly away from Kaz. "Not really."

"You want to talk?"

"Well. You aren't scared at all about my eye? Isn't it unnatural? Scary, or-or weird? Why did you only care about me crying?" Canada began to run his fingers through his hair in an attempt to cover his eye, giving him almost an emo look. It reminded him of a small phase in his life he'd rather not remember.

"That was more important." Kaz walked over to the taller country, figiditing with his hands. "I like you a lot, I wanted to make you feel better."

Can smiled and turned towards him, nervous but reassured. "So it doesn't scare you?"

Kaz shook his head no and chuckled. "Russia scares me. Not you."

He got a chuckle from Can and Kaz smiled seeing that he wasn't as bothered anymore. He didn't really think differently of his eye, it looked cool and kind of was the opposite of his golden eye. And he heard opposites attract, and if that's true maybe a thing like that could be a small way for Canada to like him more.

"Did you want to talk about more? The fighting?" Kaz sat down on the couch and patted the cushion next to him.

Canada looked at the spot he was urged to sit on and rubbed his arm. He couldn't. He wasn't allowed to, plus it ties in with America. Kaz was okay with him, but that might be because they are close friends. It might not be the same way with America. He couldn't risk his brother's safety.

"I, " Canada sighed and let his arm drop back to his side. "I can't. I'm not allowed to."

Kaz nodded and reached over the small coffee table to reach for his half-empty mug of hot chocolate. Canada looked to his and grabbed his own before taking the seat Kaz suggested for him.

"What about you? Why did you come over so late?"

Kaz took a sip and lowered his mug. "Ukraine and Russia. They were fighting."

He saw the frown on his face and the empty look in his eyes, gazing into the mug. He also had a bit of whipped cream on his lip again but didn't mention or point it out then. Instead, he wrapped his arms around Kaz and pulled him closer into a side hug.

"Ukraine keeps leaving to do what she does and says she's with you, but Russia thinks she's lying," Kaz explained, setting his mug down for a moment. "I'm worried he'll find out."

Canada nodded, knowing there wasn't much he could do to help. Russia would see right through any lie Canada could tell, he wasn't the best at telling them anyways. He really hoped Ukraine was being safe and smart with her actions. She would hate for her to get hurt or into danger when she finally found what makes her happy.

"Maybe I can talk to Ukraine. Ask her about it?"

Kaz nodded and looked up at him with pleading eyes. "Can you? I'm scared about her."

Canada nodded and set his hand on his cheek. "I will, I promise. I'll see what I can do, okay?"

He then whipped away the foam on Kaz's lip and jokingly said, "sorry, I couldn't take you seriously with that."

Kaz giggled along with Can, humming happily when he moved his hand back to cup his cheek. Canada felt a rush going through his chest when he saw Kaz smiling up at him, eyes closed in a happy peace. The fire's light flickered on him, creating shadows that danced on his face. His long hair was loosely tied back, a few strands loose and strung about. The golden bird under his eye reminded him of his wings as the glowed during the flight, warming

him up even if it was more a little while.

Needless to say, Can found himself smiling a sweet smile with his eyes half-lidded. His expression made Kaz blush when he opened his eyes a little. Canada almost straddling his face, looking at him with his green and grey irises in his eyes that contradicted each other but managed to compliment at the same time. He could see the fire's light and shape almost perfectly in the reflective eye of his. The little freckles that dotted his face, too many to count.

Kaz wanted to try but he'll save that for another day.

His thought of a kiss brought him back from being sidetracked. The fireplace setting, close together, Canada cupping his face, sharing his cabin in seclusion. It was perfect, close to what Kaz had imagined a few times even.

Just when he thought he should make a move, Canada let go of his face and cleared his throat. Maybe it was wishful thinking, be he swore he saw a red blush on Canada's cheek. It could have been the light of the fire as well, or the colors of his flag but Kaz rather imagine that Canada might be starting to like him instead.

"It's late we should sleep."

"Оның орнына мен сүйгім келеді (I wanna kiss instead), " Kaz mumbled and Canada looked at him with a raised eyebrow. He looked down flustered and lied, "I said okay, I'm sorry I forgot."

"Don't be sorry for speaking your language, okay?" Canada grabbed one of the blankets and covered himself in it, finishing off his hot chocolate after. "I think it sounds really cool. And I like learning about it."

Kaz smiled and blushed, mirroring Canada by grabbing a blanket of his own and finishing his hot chocolate. Canada yawned and waited for Kaz to put his mug down before he stood. He pushed the coffee table away from the couch a little and turned to move all the blankets and pillows onto one side of the couch. Kaz raised his brow and stood when Can asked him to. He lifted the cushions up to extend the couch into a bed like structure that made a big square to

sleep on. He adjusted the cushion more to make it a comfortable bed and spread out the blankets more to add more cushion and warmth.

"There. A bed!" Canada smiled and climbed on to get comfortable. Kaz smiled and took out his hair tie and slid it onto his wrist. He shook his head and ran his hands threw his hair and paused when he noticed Can was looking up at him.

"Oh, did you speak?"

"Hmm? Oh uh, no-no I didn't, sorry, I just don't see you with your hair down a lot." Canada smiled nervously and rubbed the back of his neck. He couldn't help but watch him ruffle his hair a bit, never really seeing his strands of blue hair out of its low ponytail and strung around his shoulders and neck.

"It stays out of my eyes, " Kaz said as he laid down on the couch, lifting his wing a little to not cover Canada but have it hover over him. He realized he couldn't keep his wing up all night so he lifted himself up a little and tried to think how he could sleep. Maybe if he slept vertically.

He shifted himself so that he was laying with his head close to Canada's but body laying vertical to Canada's. It would have been comfortable if the couch extended further and allowed Kaz to have leg support. Unfortunately, it did not.

"You can just lay your wing on me, you know. I won't mind, " Canada sat up, seeing how Kaz struggled to find a comfortable position. Kaz looked up at him and then slowly nodded, going back to his original position. He lowered his wing a little on Canada, holding it above him just the slightest still in case he changed his mind. When he didn't, Kaz rested the rest of the weight onto him and Canada turned on his side a little to face Kaz more and get comfortable.

"Your wings are really soft, " he whispered and ran his hands over the wings. Kaz shivered and twitched with his soothing pets, trying to keep any whines trapped in his throat. He liked Canada petting his wings, it gave him a sensation that was similar to someone

running their hands through your hair. The tingling down his neck and his spine along with a sense of calm washing over him.

What startled him a bit was when Canada grabbed his hand.

He peeked open his eye and seen that Canada's were closed and one hand rested on his wing while his other landed under his own hand and held onto it slightly. Kaz hummed happily and shut his eyes, grasping Canada's hand and happily blushing.

The crackles from the fire mixed with the wind from outside were muffled background noises to the deep breaths of a falling asleep Canada. He needed that sense of security as he slept, hoping that Kaz wouldn't mind it if he held his hand.

Fearful of sleep and the nightmares to come, he hoped Kaz would ward them off. Whether it be by his sense of security or relief it didn't matter which. As long as Canada could sleep, a dreamless or a good one he didn't care. Just anything but those nightmares again.

He couldn't stand to hear his brother scream like that again.

**BOO!**

**Did I scare you? I hope I did. It's the spooky time after all! Halloween is coming up soon and trick or treating may be canceled but Halloween sure ain't! Can't wait to watch horror movies, eat candy, dress up, and write these characters into a scary good time.**

**Well. Good for me. Scary for everyone else.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Drunk Love

**Narrator's POV:**

Is there anyone else who can best Russia in a gay panic contest?

Currently, no.

"You what!"

Russia winced when Poland's voice had yelled at him over the phone. After their "not date" Russia had immediately phoned Poland in hopes that he could help him, and maybe spare some sympathy over what had happened. I mean, he panicked and Poland was always understanding, of course, he would be caring and sincere.

He was wrong.

"Oh, God, you are just like Germany!"

"Vy? Vat did he do?" The German's voice came from the other end, as faint as it was Russia could still make out what he said in his heavy accent.

"He fucking hugged America instead of kissing him! Like what you did on our first date!"

"Yeah, zat's ein me halright."

"Okay okay, " Russia interrupted the two talking about his recent failure. "I messed up, but I panicked! I've never kissed anyone beforrre, much less a guy. What if I messed it up somehow?"

"You already did."

Poland 3, Russia 0.

Unamused, Russia sighed and fell backward onto his bed. He didn't feel like arguing, Ukraine had taken that out of him. She was

getting more on his nerves lately. Things she was telling him didn't have a correlating timeline. Leaving to go on a date with Canada but then America saying that he was at home with him playing video games the same night. It would've just been a small curious moment if that were the only inconsistencies.

Why would she be lying about seeing Canada? Does Canada know what she's doing? What is she doing?

"Ruzia, I could tell America vu like him but are chust too nerffous to do hanything."

"Zanks, Gerrrmany, " Russia rubbed his eyes and sat back up, readjusting his thought process. "But, I'll have to decline. Zese arrre my emotions, my prrroblems. I should be the one to handle zis."

"It's okay to ask for help, " Poland reminded him, his voice changing to be more soft and caring. Russia noted that he was using his therapy voice on him, but despite knowing the little tricks Poland knows to calm someone down and open them up, Russia still fell for them. Happily, of course now. This is honestly the first time he's opened himself up to someone else in a long time. Even this was scary.

"If you need advice we can give you some."

Russia smiled and looked down at his feet. "I know, but it seems like when you do I forrrget everrrything you told me."

He wasn't wrong, they both knew it.

"Maybe, " Russia tapped his foot a little thinking about his problem and a possible solution. "Maybe you kan somehow be zerrre to valk me thrrrough it?"

"Russia, no, you can do this. Maybe don't run away if he tries to kiss you, " Poland teased and Russia rolled his eyes. He didn't run away, he just. . . yeah he ran away.

As Poland continued telling Russia things he could do to help calm himself down In the moment, Russia started getting ready for bed. He took his ushanka off and stripped himself down to his boxers

before climbing under the covers.

"I guess, I kan trrry and do zat. I mean, I don't zink anything besides a kiss vould happen, " Russia reminded Poland, knowing very well he would try and suggest some more forward actions.

"Okay, okay, " Poland hummed and some shuffling noises came from the line. Russia watched his phone screen as if he were watching Poland move his phone, but was in actuality looking at the contact photo.

"Do you think you can plan a make up date? Like an actual date, and use the word for it, too."

"Mmmmmm, " Russia turned on his side, facing away from the stand that his phone rested on.

"Russia?"

"I guess. Maybe. I can."

"That wasn't a no, so I'm proud of you."

Russia rolled back over to face his phone and asked, "what if he says nyet?"

The line was quiet for a second before Poland in a sarcastic tone responded, " really? Cause it's America we are worrying about in this."

"Hey, ve don't know one hundrrred perrrcent he likes me."

"Russia are you trying to find ways out of this?"

".....nyet."

Poland sighed and Germany could be heard snickering in the background. And since Poland was rubbing the crease between his brows frustrated, Germany spoke up, "Ruzia, pelieffe me, America is hinterested. He's ein little vorried now, only pecauze he's schtarding to pelieffe vu don't like him."

"I do like him, I just vish I kould say it to his face, " Russia covered his own face with his hands. "I don't underrrstand why it's so harrrd forrr me guys. I was trrrained forrr vorrrse zings, zis should be easy."

He sighed and let his hands rest on his chest as he stared at the ceiling. He knows how to handle a home invasion, strategize a way out of a hostage situation, handle a cute idiot running into a blizzard, and those were just a few things he's had to work through since he's become friends with America. High-stress situations are one area where he can't fail.

Then this bastard came along and all of a sudden he can't calm his anxiety? What actual bullshit was that?

"Well, maybe you can make a plan? Carry around a paper with a list on it?"

"I'm not going to be Dipper."

"Wait who?"

"Neverrr mind, I'll tell you later, " Russia huffed, disappointed he wasted a joke like that on Poland. America would have laughed and gone along with the joke, making a small bit out of it. The thought of that made Russia smile and he started thinking that they should watch the show together soon.

"Wait, " Russia sat up at that thought. "I kan invite him over to vatch zis show I know he loves."

"Still sounds like a hang-out, Russia, " Poland pointed out. "It's too casual. How about you invite him to dinner first?"

"Yeah cauze zat vorked out vell last time, " Germany said, getting a glare at the phone from Russia and a hush from Poland.

"I invited him to late lunch, you bitch."

"I vasn't zee one vo chickened out on ein kiss vith America."

"You chickened out on a kiss with me, so silence bottom." Poland

retorted back on the behalf of Russia. After that, Germany was silent.

"Zanks, Poland, I," Russia began to say before Poland interrupted him.

"I said silence bottom!"

"I am not bottom." Russia narrowed his eyes and raised a brow.

Poland scoffed. "You're acting like it."

Russia just resorted to a scowl and a low grumble as he laid back down. "So, dinner? Zen what?"

"Ask him out, dummy!"

After a low yawn, Russia looked over to his desk and thought about staying up to write. He had a few more things to write down, but he couldn't find the focus to do it. All he could focus on lately was the disaster of his first "date" with America. He should have asked him out, he had the perfect opportunity to. Right there under the stars with the seclusion of the park. It was perfect. And yet.

"I'll trrry, but, " Russia shut his eyes and mumbled scolding curses to himself in Russian. "I kan't seem to fokus korrectly arrround him."

"You had the opportunity to say 'can't think straight around him' and you missed it, " Poland muttered, trying to make a joke for Russia to feel a bit better. It did little, but the thought was appreciated.

When Russia didn't respond vocally, Poland decided that maybe he should get some rest. It was pretty late now. Only Romania would be up at this hour and wanting to stay awake.

"Night, " Russia managed to say after Poland said his dues and hung up.

It was a quiet night, the only sound was Kaz's muffled voice downstairs getting angry at the English language again. Russia noted that Kaz was more calm and able to focus when Canada was

there to help him. Kaz always had a focusing problem, fidgeting, and zoning out whenever he needed to do something, and getting distracted easily. Their dad would get angry with him from time to time about it, but they ended up just spending more time together to keep him on track. Russia tried his best as well, helping Kaz during his late nights as he did some mindless paperwork that UN required that would have taken anyone of his siblings a few hours or so.

He and Kyrgyzstan seemed to have focusing issues, but Kyrgie seemed more okay with it and would rather not do anything anyways. Perhaps they could find him his own Canada; meaning someone that could help him focus.

For someone who was always so observant, it was weird that Russia couldn't see that Kaz had a crush on Canada. Then again, he wasn't one who took notice of things like that.

Mexico however, had begun to catch on.

"Oh, don't worry, Mexy," Canada ruffled Mexico's hair. They were having another sleepover, creating a fort out of blankets and pillows that connected to his TV. It resembled a circus tent morphed with a movie theater, which they had but Canada liked doing something like this instead.

"You're my best friend, Kaz isn't going to replace you. And I can have more than one best friend."

"I know that I'm just. I guess, I just," Mex scratched his cheek and looked to the screen that played a comedy. "I dunno, I don't want to lose you."

Canada chuckled and put his arm around Mex to pull him close and gave him a small noogie. "Aww, you can't lose me you jellybean, I'm with you till the end."

Mexico laughed and tried to get out of the headlock. The two laughed and pretended to attack each other, eventually rolling onto the sheets and pulling it down over them.

Their laughter got louder after that as Mexico was momentarily startled and almost flew into the wall.

America sat up in his bed and looked at the door, annoyed by the loudness of the others. He had wanted to go to Canada to complain and vent about the tragedy of his what felt like a date with Russia, but he was busy with Mexico. As usual.

America instead decided that maybe he should just call Germany. He might be up at this hour, after all, he is a night owl. Or at least someone who has an unhealthy sleep schedule.

His G-man wouldn't disappoint him.

As America was about to call the said country, he noticed he got a text from Russia. Quickly he clicked on it and read it with the phone clutched tightly with the screen close to his face.

*Ruski❤- Hey if you aren't busy want to come over Friday?*

*Cool Dude- Yeah sure. Am I crashing at ur place?*

*Ruski❤- Sure. Come for dinner.*

*Cool Dude- Oooh, a dinner date?~*

*Ruski❤- Sure*

America blinked.

*Cool Dude- Wait what. Wait, Russia, what.*

Russia didn't respond.

*Cool Dude- Russia dude what do u mean??*

*Cool Dude- RUSSIA!*

After a few more minutes of spamming his phone, he decided he would find out Friday. Maybe he did like him then. He has too, I mean isn't it obvious? He's just. In denial.

Right?

Yeah, of course, America thought to himself as he laid back down in bed and hugged the stuffed bear Russia stole for him. It's not like he's reading everything wrong. Or that Russia is just using him for something. For like some experimentation or something.

No no, he has to like him. How else would he explain everything?

It's okay. What he'll do is ask him directly tomorrow. If he says yes, then that's it they'll start dating.

America decided to not even think about the no. Or the it's complicated or any other answer that wasn't a yes. He can't be wrong about this, there was no way.

He hoped.

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Dinner was made, his siblings were chased out of the house, a lineup of Disney movies was ready by the tv (his original plan of watching a cartoon show was ruined when he found that his dvd's of it were missing), and Poland was ready to pick up the phone in case of an emergency. Everything was set.

"Okay, what do you do if he tries to kiss you?"

"Rrrun away."

"Russia."

"I'm joking," Russia rolled his eyes and set his phone on the dinner table. Two plate settings were made directly across from each other, their usual spots at the table when they didn't sit next to each other.

"You better be," Poland scolded, this time on video. All he saw on his screen was Russia's kitchen ceiling, but he knew Russia would see his scolding parental face.

"Now, what do you do if he tries to kiss you?"

Russia sat down with a deep sigh. "Kiss him back."
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"Good boy."

"I'm not dog."

"Yeah sure. Look, I gotta go, Germany needs my help. Just stay calm and relax, and call me if you need help okay?"

"Okay," Russia picked up his phone to wave bye to Poland before turning off his phone when he hung up. He held the device in his hands, the black screen before him reflecting his worried expression. The silence that surrounded him ran its fingers down his spine and he shivered. The drumbeat of his heart sped up and his finger tapped the table to match it.

"Kalm down," Russia thought about what Poland told him, and ironically stressed to him. His finger tapped the table more and he looked around his kitchen. The clock on the stove read 5:48, and America was supposed to get there sometime around 6.

Russia eyed the cupboard and hummed to himself.

One drink wouldn't hurt. At least just enough to calm his nerves.

When America got there, he quickly checked himself out to make sure he looked good and ready to make a Russian blush. He wasn't wearing anything provocative, no, it was just a plain shirt with ripped jeans and his jacket, but he knew he could work with anything he had.

Hell, he made him get all panicky in his normal clothes just fine, after all. Maybe Russia can wear the outfit this time. Oooooh, closet flashbacks, not the time America.

"Hey, Russia!" America announced himself when he walked inside, kicking off his sneakers. He didn't hear a response and raised a brow. He was probably somewhere else in the house then, he could wait for him in the kitchen. The silence didn't bother him as much as it would have if he was visiting any other friend. As long as nothing out of the blue happened, he could practically guess anything Russia might do.

"Nice Kountrrry!" The Russian slurred when he saw America come

into the kitchen.

Okay, he wasn't expecting that.

"Uh, Russia?" America stood in the doorframe for a moment a little startled. Russia had made yet another attempt to appear more dressed up, wearing a nice dress shirt that was now unbuttoned and opened to expose his collarbone and top half of his chest. Dribble of his saliva and drink were dripped onto his shirt, creating darker drops on the blue fabric. Even his ushanka was gone, showing off his mound of messy white fluffy hair.

"I made food forrr tvo of us!" The drunk Russian tried to get out of the chair and stumbled for a second. America went over to him and pushed him back into his seat, advising him to stay put. On the stove was a flat pan lined with cooked hotdogs and hamburger patties, enough for three.

"I ate some," Russia admitted giggling to himself as he slumped over onto the table. "But you like zis, I vanted to make you something you like."

"Aww, that's so cute."

"Yay."

America snorted at his response and grabbed a hotdog and made it up with mustard and ketchup. There were a few side dishes, the Russian variety which America had expresses he liked before.

"Is there anything else to drink, Ruski?"

Russia shook his head and tried to think, not processing the question correctly for a moment. "I have drrrink rrright herere!" He picked up his bottle of vodka and waved it around like it was some prize.

"I mean, that's not vodka," America chuckled as he took a bite of the hotdog. It had a grilled flavor to it, something that could be easily done on the stove if one knew how to. And America hadn't taught Russia to make any of his dishes. He rather make some of Russia's and learn about them instead, so as simple as it was, Russia still

went and did something for him. Maybe he did like him then.

"I have whiskey." Russia slurred standing up to fetch him a bottle. Maybe Poland was right, maybe he was a dog. A doggy that only listened to his American.

"You know what, fuck it," America swallowed the rest of his food and grabbed the bottle from Russia. "Been a while since I've drunk with you."

Russia stood in place as he watched America pour a cup from the bottle, casually drinking it. He looked cute in his attire, reminding him of the time he'd watch him from whatever class they had together. Whatever ones the other didn't skip that is.

What bothered him was the reflective glasses still on his face.

He reached for his glasses as soon as America set down his cup. America flinched back for a moment before realizing what was going on. When he saw that Russia had paused his advancement, America asked, "Is anyone home?"

"Nyet."

With a nod, Russia smiled and carefully took off his glasses as if the slightest ounce of pressure in the wrong area would shatter them. His smile grew wider when he saw the reflective black eyes of the American he so dearly cared for. He remembered the stars that shown in his eyes, how they could capture a whole galaxy and bring the wannabe cosmonaut closer to his dream.

They say eyes are the window to the soul, but these windows shielded the old soul by reflecting and shrowding it in darkness. Keeping it locked away and hidden safely so that no one could dare lay a harmful touch on it. But that moment in the park, for a beautiful shining second, they had opened up. Russia saw how utterly breathtaking the other country was, fascinated with the night sky brought in front of him.

He and America both loved the night, space, the vastness of it, along with the many stars. The stars that now came into focus for

Russia was the same that dotted America's flag. So many stars. Maybe he was the part of space he longed to visit.

"Russia, did you hear me?"

Russia shook his head and tried to focus back on reality. America was looking up at him with a raised brow.

"Huh?"

"I asked if you were okay? You zoned out for like five minutes."

Russia didn't answer and just poked America's forehead. He meant to tap one of the stars but had missed and landed on one of the stripes but despite that, he still said, "I vas looking at starrrs. I vanna kount zem."

"There's fifty, I can tell you that right now."

"Nyet spoilers," Russia almost slapped his hand over America's mouth. "You don't know how to kount, I kan, I kan kount better zan you."

America chuckled and finished off his drink. "Oh really? Fine, you can count, just let me grab some more food."

"Fiiiiiiiiiine," Russia slurred and rolled his head back until he could see the wall behind him. Everything looked so confusing upside down to the drunk but as soon as his head rush set in he immediately went for another drink.

When America sat down Russia immediately went to counting his stars. Only thing was, he was counting in Russian. America didn't have the heart to tell him that he couldn't understand him, so he went along with it. The food he had wasn't bad, a little cold but that was because he was almost not even allowed to come over. His dad decided that last minute he shouldn't leave the house, since he and one of his mothers Wales decided that it was too dangerous for him to be at places for a long period of time. And a sleepover at Russias was not in the books.

Of course, he lied and said he'd be back tonight.

Either way, the arguments made him a little late.

"You have all starrrs, zerrre arrre none missing," Russia declared as if any of them missing was ever in question. Still, his look of triumph was adorable to America and he couldn't help but laugh.

The two ended up talking together, sharing drinks, and making up completely random stories that turned into something that not even the beginning could match with. It was fun for America to have some weight taken off of his shoulders, be freed of his recent troubles, and be able to breathe and not fake a smile.

Even seeing his glasses didn't make him frown. Normally they would, but here with Russia, he knew he didn't need to be scared.

He was free.

"Hey, remember that time we danced to Ra Ra Rasputin?" America asked as he pulled out his phone. Now buzzed, it took him a moment longer to even remember his password. He had it changed after Russia was able to guess his first one, and had to keep changing it when Russia somehow knew each new one until he had Canada create one for him.

"Da, it vas fun. You looked like idiot when dancing," Russia's accent came out thicker and slurred, but America had no problems understanding him. He rather liked his thicker accent.

"Rrra Rrra Rrrasputin," Russia started mumbling as he lifted his almost empty bottle of vodka.

"Russian's are such uwu beans." America finished and leaned over to boop Russia's cheek.

"What?"

"You're cute, it's what I'm saying." America set down his phone, forgetting why he even opened it in the first place. He thought he needed to show Russia something but eh. If he can't remember it probably wasn't important.

"I'm not kute. I am handsome!" Russia puffed out his chest and tried

to sit taller. "I am most handsome in the vorrrld."

"Yea you are you cutie." America winked at Russia, who didn't understand the flirtatious part of what he said and only understood it as he was saying he wasn't handsome but just cute. How dare he.

"I'm not kute, I'm skarrry. I'm skarrry and handsome."

America shook his head and laughed. "You really are persistent."

Russia suddenly slapped his hand down and stood up, throwing his chair back. America jumped up, letting out a loud yelp and thinking that something was wrong.

"Pinetrrree!"

America, his chest rising up and down quickly and his heart racing blinked and few times and looked around the room. "Uhhh, what?"

"I made reeeferrrence to show, Grrravity Falls, Poland didn't get it!"

America gasped dramatically. "No! The audacity, you know what this means, right?"

Russia shook his head no.

"We have to get into a group and binge-watch the show!" He raised his hand in the air for a high five and Russia returned it with the same enthusiasm as it was presented to him.

"Yourrr place is bigger ve kan go zerrre," Russia suggested as he went to sit back down. The seat had completely fallen over so there was no chair there for him to sit on. He didn't realize this and instead found out when he was suddenly falling to the ground, any source of help gone in a split second. He hit the ground with a thud and a surprised cry.

"Oh, dude are you okay?" America stood up and went around the table to make sure he didn't hit his head or anything. Russia shook his head no and looked around him to try and find out why he had fallen.

"My chairrr. It's gone. My chairrr disappearrred," Russia whined and looked like he was about to genuinely cry. America quickly swooped him into a hug and shushed him, hoping he wouldn't.

"Shhhh, Ruski, it's okay, it's okay. You just kicked it, remember? When you stood up?" America soothed him while trying not to laugh. He could not be crying over a chair right now, that is so not Russia. It's a Ruski thing to do, however.

As if completely forgetting why he was even upset, Russia looked over at the stove and licked his lips. "I'm hungrrry, kan you let go of me?"

America did as he asked and picked up the chair Russia knocked over while he was busy getting some more food. They both sat down next to each other, Russia eating away and telling America about a new horror movie they could watch together. He kept trying to say important things to the plot but then would hush them both and say that's a secret he can't say.

"Do you remember that one time in class when Chile started a fire?"

"I like firrre."

"You sound like a psychopath," America chuckled but continued with the story. "But, he was like trying to show off this cool lighter trick to someone–I can't remember– and caught his papers on fire. Were you there when that happened?"

Russia was just staring at America as he talked, listening to his words but not making any sense of them. He was speaking English, and that language was confusing as hell. It was okay for him, he was practically fluent at this point, but still, just some bits of it were so dumb. Grammar was weird, too.

No wonder it made it hard to learn other languages. The grammar is always backward. Or there are just too many words.

Words are dumb.

A word that isn't dumb is meatball.

Russia chuckled out loud at the thought. "фрикаделька," he dragged out each syllable and laughed at how weird it sounded.

"What did you say?" America looked at Russia confused, another cup of whiskey in hand.

"фрикаделька," Russia repeated as if America would somehow know that word. Alas, America wasn't too versed in words for foods in Russian. So he just nodded and acted like he understood as he did when he was counting and continued his story.

Still, Russia couldn't focus on anything he was saying. It was all jumbled words that he could only pick one or two out. He had mentioned fire earlier, though. He did like fire. It was so warm and pretty. It kept him from freezing during the war when they had little power or heating. Fire was pretty. Angel Boy's wings could hold the heat from the fire only for a little while then, too.

America started laughing suddenly, breaking Russia from his thoughts. He looked up at him, seeing his face scrunch up in a smile with his eyes closed and his head bobbing up and down with each laugh. His actions seemed to be more sluggish, that or time started to slow down around them. It was better than the doubling he had earlier. He thought he had two hamburgers but was sad when he realized he only had one.

"So when," America broke into another laughing fit. "When she saw the food on my dad's head, Liberty, she just dove at him and he screamed so loud. That's why they aren't allowed at the house, he's scared of them."

"Hmmm? Who's huh?" Russia blinked at America unfocused and only now able to understand English again. He heard him mention his father and he got worried. America's dad was mean to him, what if he did something wrong?

America laughed and poked Russia's forehead. "I'll tell you when you are sober."

"You'rrre sober," Russia poked his forehead back.

"More sober than you." America joked as he took another drink. He wasn't there yet, but give him a few more minutes and he will be. Maybe if Russia would share his vodka too.

"Wait, Poland called me last night asking if we wanted to hang out with him and Germany. Did you want to go?"

"Daaaa, I love my Poland. He's so nice, and helpful. He's pushy." Russia remembered their conversation earlier and what he was instructed to do. Maybe he should listen to Poland for once. He did get inside his own head a lot. And right now he feels like he's outside of it. Inside his head still, but not in the bad worry feeling part. That part he found annoying. Almost as annoying as America, but he does it cutely.

Cute.

America was cute to him.

Why was he so scared about that? So what if he's cute, he is. It's purely stating a fact.

Watching him laugh at his own stories, how he would turn to face him sometimes during each tale, using his hands as he spoke. His expressions were dramatic, each raise of an eyebrow, squinting of eyes, or stretched mouth, it all added to how he was. It was easy for Russia to tell how he felt when he was very expressive with how he moved and looked.

What interested Russia the most was his lips.

How they moved, turning up into a smile that made Russia's heart flutter. He wanted to reach out and hold America still so he could focus on them. They were moving too fast, he just had to stop talking.

"And then- hey what are you doing?" America asked when he felt Russia grab him by his arms, turning his body to face his. Russia looked at him, focused piercing turquoise irises that looked at him in the eye for only a moment before glancing down.

"You talk too much," he said as he quickly pulled him closer,

connecting their lips.

America's eyes widened and his whole body went stiffed when he realized what was happening.

Holy fuck Holy fuck Holy fuck holy fuck!

America pulled himself away in complete shock. Russia started laughing, seeing how red his face had gotten.

"You look like tomato!" He practically shouted before leaning onto the table to continue laughing at the sudden change of color on America's face. It was indeed a bright red, one that made him look like he lost his white stripes for a moment.

"Russia, did, wait. Wait wait, did you just? Uh, hang on, um," America stuttered out, shaking his head and hiding his face trying to comprehend everything. "Did you just kiss me?"

Russia sat up nodding and smiling like an idiot. "Yeah, kan I do it again? I liked it, I vanna do it again."

America hesitated, glancing at the vodka bottle on the table. Before he had any time to answer, Russia cupped his face and brought him closer, their lips grazing. He hesitated, breathing out deeply. America looked up at Russia, seeing his eyes gazing down. He leaned forward and rested his forehead on America's, placing his hands on his shoulders.

"I like you. I rrreally do."

America smiled, placing his hands on Russia's arms. "I like you too."

"I'm skarrred. I don't know what I'm doing, I've never felt anything like zis, I don't know what to do-"

America interrupted Russia by pulling him into another kiss. He wrapped his arms around his neck, almost leaning off his chair to kiss him properly. Russia ignored what he was going to say, partially forgetting it, and held America closer to himself to make the kiss deeper.

America noticed and stood up, leaning over Russia, lifting his head a little. He ran his thumb under Russia's bottom lip, slightly pulling down. He complied and slightly opened his mouth, allowing America to slip his tongue inside. He had little trouble controlling the direction of the kiss, with Russia mirroring his actions. He was a sloppy drunk kisser, but America could forgive him for that.

When Russia suddenly picked him up, America was caught off guard and held onto his shoulders for dear life. Russia laughed at his expression and held him closer, nuzzling his neck as he walked into the living room. He remembered he had a movie waiting for him on the couch, *Tangled*, he thought. He liked the movie it reminded him of Angel Boy and his glowing wings.

Those lanterns.

They were like the stars he saw in his nice country's eyes.

Beautiful and pointing to a path, an adventure that would change his life. And it already has, if he could focus enough to realize that.

He refused to put America down until the movie was playing on the tv, not wanting him to suddenly disappear or be taken away from him. America didn't mind at all, holding onto Russia and burying his face in his neck. Oh, how he wanted to tease Russia a bit, play with his sensitive skin and leave marks on his neck for everyone to see that he was his. But, as he said before, he was scared. He didn't want to worry the poor guy any more than what he already was.

When the movie did start playing, Russia turned to the couch that faced the TV and set America down carefully before climbing on top of him. He hovered over him for a second, looking down and examining his lips again. The suggestive position and his previous thoughts made America blush and a swarm of butterflies to start doing backflips in his stomach. Russia didn't notice and instead kissed him softly again before moving down to rest his head on his chest. He adjusted himself so he can lay comfortably, wrapping his arms around his Nice Country as if he were his pillow.

"You know," America cleared his throat and paused when he saw Russia looking up at him with his adorable innocent face. "I um. I

mean, sober you is going to have a hell of a time with this."

"Sober me is sober," Russia said matter of factly and laid his head back down to face the tv. America chuckled and ruffled Russia's hair, getting a small happy noise from the Russian. He rested his hand in his hair and slowly played with a few strands, massaging his head.

It was soothing to him, so much so his eyelids started feeling heavier. America's heartbeat comforted him, helping to lull him to sleep. He was so calming, peaceful in his own obnoxious way. He finally got to kiss him, too. He had been wanting to do that for so long but could never manage the courage to even try.

Now he did it! It was so amazing and so relieving.

Russia almost couldn't believe what he did.

**FINALLYYYY!! LIKE FIFTY CHAPTERS IN AND THEY FINALLY KISS HA HA! How about that. The gay has properly arrived.**

**Or has it?**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# Sobering Truth

**Narrator's POV**

Russia almost couldn't believe what he had done.

He kissed America!? He knew he should of stopped drinking last night!

"Dude, it's okay, I didn't mind it."

"Zat's not point!"

"Uh, consent is a good point."

"Nyet, I mean da, but," Russia paused, struggling to process everything. He had woke up to find America under him, which startled him but was surprisingly expected somehow. Something like this happens whenever he drinks, a fact that he forgot when he decided to drink last night. He expected to find marks on America's neck and was relieved to find none, worrying that he could have taken advantage of him while he was drunk. What he didn't expect was for America to wake up and kiss him good morning.

It was after Russia practically threw himself off and panicked about what he did that America explained what happen last night. Finding him drunk, them drinking together, and then Russia kissing him.

"Nyet, zis vasn't supposed to happen, it vasn't suppose to go like zis!" He rubbed his mouth and paced back and forth while America watched him from the couch with worried eyes. "You'rrre my frrriend, a guy! Zis vasn't supposed to happen."

"Russia, it's really okay," America tried to walk closer to him go help calm him down but paused when he saw Russia flinch away. He held his hand close to his chest and tried to ignore the pain he got from that small action. "I know you like me, you told me."

"I what!?" Russia screamed.

America jumped at the sudden increased volume. He sounded. . . angry. That's. . . that's not right, that can't be right, why would he be angry? Scared and nervous, sure, but angry? Angry isn't good. Angry doesn't mean what America hoped it would mean.

"Nyet, nyet, nyet. Zis vasn't supposed to happen, nyet," Russia rubbed his hands through his hair as he tried to focus. He had a plan what happened to the plan? He can't think, he couldn't have done that, no he couldn't have. What if he messed up? Would he loses America? Even as a friend, he didn't want to lose that cute bastard, what if it wasn't the right move? No, no, he should have followed the plan! "Nyet, you'rrre my komrrrade, nyet, my best frrriend, I kan't. Nyet, I can't like you like zat, I kan never like you like zat!"

The words hit like a bullet and America gasped. No, no, no, no, no, this, no, this can't be right. No, he told him, he confessed to him! This can't be right. This isn't supposed to happen.

Never?

"Right," America rubbed his arm, his head lowering as his entire body felt heavier. He sharply turned towards the kitchen and briskly walked to it to grab his glasses then went to grab his coat.

"Vait, Amerrrica, please don't leave!" Russia called out as soon as he noticed that America was grabbing his coat. His own words startled him and as much as they stunned America, they had stunned Russia. He paused and leaned against the living room doorframe, opening his mouth to say something but his voice was caught in his throat.

"Ve kan just," Russia managed out, struggling to find words. Follow the plan, he should have followed the plan! "Ve kan vatch TV orrr something, please stay."

America kept his eye line down as he adjusted his coat collar. To keep himself from taking the coat back off and following Russia into the living room, he rather harshly shoved his hands in the coat pockets. He turned his head just the slightest towards Russia and paused.

"I can't, I 'ave sum thin's to do today," his voice turned monotone, and he shifted away from Russia, leaning towards the door. After a moment of pause, he walked to the door and opened it. "See ya' later, Russia."

Without a glance back, he left and the door slowly closed behind him.

Russia groaned and hit his head on the doorframe he was leaned against. "Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid," he scolded himself as he hit his head again for each word. His forehead hurt and felt like it was throbbing, matching the speed of his heartbeat that was starting to slow. The adrenaline had begun to leave him, draining him, making his legs weak.

"Why did I even say anything," Russia asked out loud to air and slumped down. "I should of followed plan."

America sniffed, the colder air quickly making him shiver as it entered briskly into his lungs. He moved fast, the slight wind resistance making the air feel colder than it was, although that could be contributed to his previous brush with serious frostbite. His skin wasn't as sensitive to cold as it was before, but it still made him hug his arms tightly. An action he would have done without the cold, as it expressed his attempt to hold everything inside.

A single tear slid down his cheek and as soon as it appeared, America just as quickly rubbed it away. To make a point to himself he wiped both of his eyes and tried to steady his shaky breaths. Could Russia really mean never?

Not wanting to think about it anymore, he pulled out his phone and went right to his contacts. He scrolled through them all before deciding on texting South Korea.

*Cool Dude- Hey, you at home?*

After a few minutes, he still didn't receive a reply, so like a normal friend, he decided to call and see if he would pick up then.

His phone rang and after a few seconds South picked up. His end

was filled with background noise, video games, and his last of a shout at a character on one of his monitors.

"Yo, wassup, I'm in the middle of a zombie horde right now."

"Nothing, can I crash your parade for awhile?"

"Only if you can carry your weight this time and not get me killed." South taunted, pausing his game when he got to a safe spot for an easy reentry back to the fight. He looked down at his phone to America's contact photo, him making a dumb face as America tried to defend himself.

"Let's face it, if it weren't for me you wouldn't have made it through that round."

"I'm not the one who threw the grenade at himself."

"Listen, that was an accident!" America pointed his finger at the air as if South were standing in front of him. "And I didn't die so, no harm done."

"You gave away our position dumbass!"

"Hush, that doesn't matter either."

South sighed and scrolled through his phone notifications, checking to see if there was anything important he needed to see. Just a few texts from Japan and Vietnam, but he could ignore those for the moment.

"How long until you'll get here?"

America looked up and tried to see where he was exactly. He knew he was close to China's place, maybe a 30-minute walk until he got to South's. "Uh, 'bout a half hour."

"Okay, I'll see what mood 이북, 以北 (North) is in."

"Gotcha, I'll text you when I'm close," America said as he hung up and went through his phone. He could ask for a ride from someone, but he'd rather walk. Sitting in a car with not much to distract

himself with wasn't exactly what he wanted, especially if the driver asks him why he looks upset.

His thoughts of that were interrupted when he noticed he had a few texts and missed calls from his dad and his brothers. They were probably calling him to see where he was at and cause their dad had asked them to. Apparently, Wales was supposed to be visiting and it was important for America to be there, but he had figured spending the night at Russia's would be better.

"God damn it," he mumbled to himself. He tried to think of other things, even scrolling through his phone and listening to music to help keep himself occupied.

By the time he was about five minutes away, America texted South he was gonna be there soon. What he found weird was that South left him on read without as much as a simple acknowledgment or even that update on North Korea's mood. Not that it would have mattered anyway, America didn't care that much.

To his surprise, unsure if it was more pleasant or confusing, North Korea didn't try and pick a fight with him. Not even as much as a negative comment nor a sour look. When America walked into the house, North was sitting on his side of the living room with Martial, the two chatting away. When North noticed America, he simply waved to him and turned back to his conversation.

America blinked a few times, taken aback by the lack of hostility. It felt off. Was everyone going to be acting differently around him today, or was it just these two? Either way, it didn't matter to him right then. All he wanted to do was beat up some zombies with his friend.

All Russia wanted to do was go back in time.

Redo everything he said to America now that he had processed everything. He had faint memories, blurry, and fuzzy but able to piece the story together. He did recall the kiss, the two at the table at least. He wished he could undo his attempt to steady his nerves and go head-on into their make up date sober. And right now, he wished he could undo his calling of Poland.

"You did what!?"

Russia held the phone away from his ear as he had prepared for the Polish yelling.

"Yeah, I scrrreved up."

"Big time! What happened? Like, walk me through it." Poland had to sit down on his and Germany's bed to be able to comprehend everything. The previous night they had prepared for anything Russia could do, even if he got drunk! They knew very well that if he had a bit of alcohol in him he would more likely than not tell America his feelings. To their credit, Poland was right.

What they didn't prepare for was for Russia to jump right on into denial in the aftermath.

After Russia gave Poland the walkthrough of the night, mixing his memories and America's explanation for an easier understanding and a fuller picture, Russia had made his way to the kitchen. Their food from last night had been left out and he wanted to take care of it, busying his hands.

"You said that?"

Russia sighed and mumbled his response, not wanting to admit to it.

"Oh, Russia. Russia, Russia, Russia," Poland shook his head as he said his name in his disappointed tone.

"I know, I fucked up."

"Okay, yes, but. You- you need to apologize to him!"

Russia sat down at the kitchen table and slumped onto it, laying his head on his arm and playing with the base of the vodka bottle that was left there. He knew he needed to apologize, that was an obvious thing to do. But at the same time, he figured America might need his own space. He runs from his problems. In this case, he literally ran. So he wouldn't want to face it anytime soon, and neither did Russia.

Why couldn't he just get over the fact that he likes a guy?  He's acknowledged it, faced it head-on, hell went on a date with him! He's done all these things with America, so why can't he just face value and be okay with liking a guy? He has no problem with anyone he knows being gay, so why is it so hard for him to accept himself?

Everyone else is okay with their sexuality, even those who are gay. They are open about it, okay with it. He knows it's okay, so why can't he just be like that? Why does he still feel this guilt, this underlying feeling that this is wrong? Why can't he just be happy with who he likes like everyone else?

"Russia?"

"Hm?" Russia was pulled from his troubles back to his phone and the conversation he was having with Poland.

"Look, I have to go. Please, call America and apologize."

"Okay."

"Bye."

With that abrupt end, unsure if Poland had even said anything else while he was distracted in his thoughts, Russia picked up his phone. He scrolled through his contacts and stopped right on America's. The photo that smiled back at him was a more recent one, America being insistent that he changed it to be one of him in a Snapchat filter. Looking up at the camera, sunglasses still on with his tongue sticking out. They were playing video games that day, hanging out for a smaller version of their family get together.

Caught in the moment and hyper-focused now, Russia scrolled through his contact info, something that America also edited. His number was the only thing that stayed the same, with everything else being altered. His name was "The Cute American" having been originally, "The Hot American" when America changed everything. Russia secretly changed it cause the wording seemed too forward at the time. It still does. The fact that he even kept it similar to what America put in was something he guarded heavily.

He even changed his contact notes, something that Russia doesn't even bother with unless there was something important about that person he needed to remember about.

It read, "America is the amazing, cool, spectacularly awesome country that Russia is just so (not) secretly in love with. He's just so obviously gay for him it hurts. Ride the rainbow train with the rest of us Ruski before we pass your stop."

What then seemed like a funny joke only made Russia feel worse. Of course, there was no train of rainbows, but it certainly felt like he missed his best chance.

As his finger hovered over the button to call him, that thought stuck in his head. He couldn't have missed his chance, right? Sure he's never really heard America speak in such a cold manner towards him, not very recently at least. If anything it was always Russia brushing him off and storming away.

Maybe this was his punishment? Karma, if you will. He wasn't always understanding with America, perhaps it served him right. He doesn't deserve America, look at him. He's such a lovable idiot who would do anything for him, and Russia, he. . . yells. He gets angry. He hurts him.

Without a word, Russia shuts off his phone and sets it down. He looked at his kitchen, seeing how much he still had to tidy up. Belarus would freak if she saw the state of the room. When he quickly scanned the rest of it, his eyes fell back onto the vodka bottle.

As he reached out to grab it, he found himself hesitating. His hand twitched as a sudden thought, an urge to call America came to him. Instead of giving in, he brushed off the quick feeling and opened the bottle.

He was better off right now, anyway. Maybe space for a few hours at least is what they needed. Until then, vodka could be his friend for right now.

Back with America, he and South were up in his room playing video

games. A common activity for them to do, with South more often than not kicking America's ass in the games. At least in the 1v1 portion of games.

It had been a few hours now, and America could tell something was wrong. He was winning. Too easily in fact. Whenever he did manage a win, it was always hard and always a close call, something he rather enjoyed with South. It was a challenge! This time, it didn't feel that way.

South seemed distracted. He didn't react as fast as he normally would, his commentary felt flat, and he was even taking his eyes off-screen. Whenever America caught him, he was looking at him. It would be a quick sideways glance and South would almost as quickly look back to the screen. America started to wonder if there was something on his face, or if he smelled funny, but all of those were things South would immediately point out and they would joke about it before fixing it.

America even made sure his glasses were on properly, and they where. So he didn't know what it was.

When he won another round, America turned to South and asked, "dude, wassup? You been acting all spacey. And not in the funny high kind."

South kept his eyes on the screen, fumbling with his controller for a moment. He could see his eyes quickly moving as if he were scanning a board of options in front of him. He wanted to step out of the room and take a break from the obvious awkwardness that South couldn't help but build up. He didn't expect it, how could he have?

"I uh," South's voice broke when he spoke and he cleared his throat. He kept his eyes down, obviously avoiding eye contact and stiffening his shoulders and body posture. America noticed the behavior, only ever seeing him act that way towards North. This was off. Was this some weird opposite day or something that America wasn't aware of?

"You know how Poland had his wings come back right?"

"Well, yeah, everyone knows about that by now. It was a total mystery how it happened." America chortled at the questioning tone that came from South. How could no one know? He's been flying all over the place with his wings. He's right up there with Kaz and his younger brother with being open about them.

"Do you know if he, um," South clicked his tongue. "Do you know if he had gotten his powers back? I heard he used to be able to heal back then."

America thought about it, setting the controller down in his lap. They were both sitting on gamer chairs, the kind that spun so America moved the chair back and forth a little as he thought.

"I actually don't know. Maybe? I mean, maybe that's how he re-grew his wings, I dunno."

South looked down and back at the screen in front of him. He looked very worrisome, with a blatant frown and slanted eyebrows. He asked about healing. Healing? And he's been worried and looking at America like he was trying to say something, or was bothered by something.

Is he hurt? Sick? Oh, God. What if he was dying?

"South, are you okay? You aren't sick or anything are you?" America had begun to slightly panic, focusing on tiny details to see if he had any evidence of cracks or possible injures.

"No, no, I'm okay." South smiled and tried to calm America's worries down, for the first time looking towards America with his knowledge. The moment was quick however when he looked right back to the screen. "It's nothing big, I'll be fine. I just. Wanted to know, you know?"

He started the game again, the booming voice of the announcer quickly filling the room. America looked at him worried but decided to push it aside for later. If there was something wrong with South he could give Japan a call. She would spill easily, especially if she was worried.

After a few more rounds of the game, South eventually told America that he had to get some work done for a class. Something about a lightweight metal, America didn't pay too much attention. But that meant that America couldn't distract himself with video games with South anymore, so he decided to see if he could crash somewhere else for the evening. It had gotten a little late, time flying by as he set a new record for wins in a row while playing with South. It may have been while he seemed distracted, but it didn't matter. A win is a win.

Thinking about how South acted weird earlier, America called Japan to ask about it. He hoped that he wasn't secretly sick or something. Having to hide an illness from your friends is a hard thing to do, and it hurts. He'd never want someone he cares about feeling that way.

When Japan didn't pick up or respond to his texts, he figured she was busy making a new manga. She usually is good at keeping her focus when working on those. The art is really good, and he does like reading her work. Admittedly, even the NSFW ones. She'd get back to him when she can.

But that left him with no place to go but home. He didn't want to do that.

More than a dozen missed calls from his dad and mom, texts from his brothers that said he needed to get home dad needed him, or something close. He had told Canada where he was at just so they didn't worry, but not to tell their dad. For all he knew he could show up at South's and confront America there.

He has done that a few times before. And he didn't want that at all today.

When he was swiping away the notification of missed calls and unopened texts, he noticed a few missed calls from Russia.

He hoped he wasn't mad at him.

Having to decide whether he wanted to face Russia or his dad, he chose the latter. A questioning gay over his probable angry father

seemed way more preferable.

He called Russia and after a few seconds of listening to Ra Ra Rasputin, Russia picked up.

"Nice Kountrrry!" Came the loud voice of a very drunk Russian.

"Russia, really again?" America sighed.

"Nyet, nyet, nyet," Russia hiccuped a few times and cleared his throat, a lot of shuffling noises coming from his end. "Beforrre you do the talky talk vith yourrr face, yourrr verrry kute face, I have something to say."

There he went again. Calling him cute.

"I. Am. Sorrrry."

"Russia, I," America tried to speak but was hushed by Russia.

"I verrry dumb and don't know how to say my feelings. I am emotionally trrroubled and incompetent as said by Poland, I zink, and whatever zat means, I know you know zat and zat I kan be verrry stupid and verrry dumb."

America couldn't help but roll his eyes with a smile. He really was an idiot, but an idiot that he liked.

"And since I dumb, I said zose bad vorrrds. Zey verrren't bad vorrrds like bad bad vorrrds, not like the vorrrds like fuck and shit, nyet. Zey made you feel bad. Zat's why zey arrre bad vorrrds."

"Ruski you are rambling."

"Rrright, rrright, rrright." Russia cleared his throat. "I vanted to say, I'm sorrry, I did not mean to say zose vorrrds and I-" his words were halted for a second as a loud crashing sound interrupted him.

"Russia what was that?" America started to pick up the pace, heading in the direction of Russia's house. The idiot is gonna hurt himself if he's stumbling around drunk like he probably was.

"Zat's not imporrrtant. What is imporrrtant is you. And I love you!"

America screeched to a halt. He stood in place for a second, panting lightly and staring frozen ahead. Did he just say what he thinks he just said?

"What did you say Russia? Like what did you mean?" He asked standing in place, waiting for Russia to say something to him. The second or two it took Russia to answer felt like ten minutes to him.

"I love you! A lot. I didn't mean what I said, I rrreally do like you."

The words swirled around in America's head, the world starting to spin as well. He loves him? And not in a friendly way? He must not have meant never.

"Russia, are you serious? Cause I can't have you kept telling me yes and no here buddy."

Russia blew a raspberry at his phone, falling backward onto the couch.

"I didn't say 'yes and no' I said I loved you. Kan ve kiss again, I don't rrremember firrrst time zat much."

America chuckled, rubbing his neck, and felt his face warm up. Drunk Russia sure is more forward and honest. Maybe he was telling the truth then. He must have just gotten scared or something. It isn't easy questioning your sexuality, America knew that. He shouldn't have stormed out that only could have made him feel worse.

Hence the drinking.

"How about I come over, we can sober you up and talk?"

"Okay. If you help me find my karrrtoon, I lost it."

"Cartoon?"

"Da, one vith Dipper and Mabel."

"Oooooo, Gravity Falls. Hell yeah, I'll help you, as long as we can watch it together."

They talked about the show a little more as America walked back towards Russia's house, Russia slurring and trying to explain certain plot points he thought America really needed to know. It was then he realized he had the censored version of it and he missed a few things. He'll have to grab his own so he could watch the full show.

When America got to the front door he hung up after Russia opened it. He knew he would get upset if he hung up on him without him seeing that he was there.

"Nice Kountrrry!" Russia shouted, grabbing up America in a tight hug. America winced as he swore he heard his bones break, or more accurately his back crack.

"Okay, okay, Ruski, I. Can't. B-breath."

Russia set him back down and watched as America took a deep breath and stretched out his back. He didn't mean to hug him so tightly, he just missed him a lot. And he had made him feel sad earlier, he didn't like it when his nice country felt sad.

He followed America around the kitchen as he made Russia something to eat so he could start to sober up. He acted like a lost puppy, something that America teased him about. He didn't expect Russia to bark and stick his tongue out, but when he did he laughed loudly about it.

"You're adorable," America hummed as he set the plate of food down at the table. "Sit."

Russia sat down in the chair where America had put the food.

"Eat."

Russia, ignoring the fork, picked up his food with his hand, and ate.

"Good puppy," America patted Russia's head and turned to grab him some water. As much as he loved messing with Russia while he was drunk, they needed to have a serious talk.

If Russia did like him, as he has said while drunk then he needed to be able to come to terms with it. They don't have to get into a relationship, not if Russia doesn't feel comfortable or ready for that. And if he does, the mere thought of that making America's hopes go up, they don't have to be public about it. He can come out when he's ready to.

But America couldn't allow himself to be lead on, and if Russia doesn't know that's what he's doing then he needs to know. That way they can fix it. One way or the other.

He didn't want the other.

A loud thump made America jump. He turned around from the counter he was facing and saw Russia slumped over on the table. Taking a closer look, he saw that he was face down in his plate of food. Pieces of it were scattered around his plate and undoubtedly covering his face.

"Russia?" America set his snack down. "You okay?"

"Hmm?" Russia lifted his head, pieces of his food sticking to his face and landing on his plate with an audible 'plop'. He let out a yawn, lazily rubbing his face with his hand and arm.

"Did you just fall asleep?"

"Uh," he looked down at his food than back up towards America. "Da."

The sigh from America was a shallow and brief one, but Russia couldn't help but feel as if he had done something wrong.

"We can talk in the morning, you want to go to bed?"

"Da."

"Okay, I can just put this in the fridge then."

Russia went upstairs to sleep in his bed, stumbling and leaning against the wall for support. America cleaned a little in the kitchen, trying to hurry in case Russia fell down the stairs or just fell in

general.

He wished he could have talked to him tonight, however. He didn't want to put this off, not when it would be too hard to ignore something like this.

In total honesty, he was a little angry. Frustrated, more like. But he was able to keep it tame for the moment, seeing how in the morning there would be no way out of it for either of them.

"Hey," America nodded his head towards Russia when he went into his room. He was sitting on the bed, the blanket around him like a cape, and his ushanka set down on his desk. His white hair swirled up in tufts, strands of it pointing in every direction possible.

"Это заняло у тебя целую вечность (You took forever.)"

"Я был занят тем, что убирал твой мусор, тупица, (I was busy cleaning your mess, dummy,)" America poked Russia's forehead and stood in front of him. He had a bad case of hat hair and America made it worse by ruffling it. "You promise we can talk tomorrow?"

Russia nodded, satisfying the other for the moment.

America took off his glasses, setting them down by Russia's bed. He yawned, stretching out his arms and thought about crashing next to Russia. He wouldn't let him go anywhere else anyway, since he was so clingy. A fact that America undoubtedly loved and found cute as hell, and could work in his favor for when they woke up.

He'll just not kiss him when he did this time.

America took off his shirt to get comfortable and decided to leave his jeans on, figuring Russia would be embarrassed if he laid next to him like that.

Russia clapped happily when America said he was going to sleep next to him. When he jumped up to pull him down on the bed with him, his blanket fell off of him and revealed that he was stripped down to his boxers.

Needless to say, America was the one embarrassed and Russia loved

holding his tomato closely in his arms as he slept.

Until he woke up.

Dazed and confused, Russia awoke hungover in his bed. He was used to that and with the light coming through his window, he wanted nothing but to fall back asleep.

It was a different story when he realized someone else in his bed. At first, he was okay with America laying next to him. He couldn't remember how he got there, or why he was there, but it was good that he was.

He didn't hate him.

He was going to fall back asleep and hold him close again until he realized that he could see his shoulders and collarbone area. He didn't have a shirt on.

Russia didn't have his shirt on. Or his pants.

He was laying next to him practically naked!

"Shit!" He shouted, jumping away from America and consequently falling off the bed.

"Huh, what?" America grumbled as he sat up, startled awake by the loud shout and subsequent thud. He looked over to see Russia's foot still on the bed, the blanket took down with him.

"Oh shit, dude, are you okay?"

Russia laid on the floor looking up at America and practically trying to hold onto it for some form of stability. His face had grown hot as blood rushed to his cheeks at the realization of what possibly happened last night.

Why the fuck did he drink!?

"Russia?"

"Ve didn't um," Russia scrambled to his feet, hugging the blanket

around him. "Ve didn't like, you know," he swirled around his finger between them and avoided eye contact with America.

Understanding what he meant, he shook his head no.

"No, we didn't have sex if that's what you're asking."

"Thank God," Russia sighed and realized how that came out. He held out a hand frantically waving it as he scrambled out," I mean, not like in bad vay, I didn't vant zat to kome out veirrrdly, not zat it kould of, but I didn't vant it to sound insulting, but if you took it zat vay, I'm so sorry."

"Russia, for your sake, be quiet." America leaned over, kneeling on the bed, and set his finger over Russia's mouth.

"Let me explain what happened last night. You called me drunk and I came over and made you some food and you fell asleep. That's all."

Russia nodded and loosened his grip on his blanket, relaxing his shoulders as well.

"Zat's all? No-nothing else?"

"Weell," America rubbed the back of his neck and his voice went higher up in pitch too. Russia began to panic again.

"You said you loved me. And not in the just friend's way."

"I uh." Russia gulped and looked around his room as if looking for a way out. "I said, I said what?"

"That you love me?" America slid off the bed, standing to look up at Russia. He needed to know now, he couldn't wait. He had said never sober, would he say it again?

"I um."

Russia couldn't control his breathing, sweat forming in his palms and beginning to appear on his forehead. The room seemed to shrink as America stepped closer, the spotlight on the two of them.

A thousand eyes watched them from the shadows, awaiting his answer.  He couldn't use the blanket as cover, not as he used to as a child when he felt scared. It was useless, just as useless as a piece of paper holding back a tidal wave.

And the wave is about to crash.

"Russia?" America asked, his black eyes pleading with him to give him an answer. "Did you mean it?"

"I," he tugged on the blanket, growing angry with himself for stumbling with his words. Spit it out, a voice inside of him said. Say something!

"I don't, I didn't-"

"Don't!"

Crash.

The world fell silent and everything was still. The nauseating waves stirred around Russia, his knees trembling and his stance swaying. The still point, the only sense of focus he had left was America. His dejected eyes turned away from him. His frown, twitching down tightly as he suppressed a flurry of emotions.

"Don't say it. I don't want to hear it again." He muttered, crossing his arms over his chest, hugging himself closer. His eyes reflected more light as tears began to form.

"You meant like a friend. Or best friend huh? You don't like me any more than that, you never will."

"Amerrrica, I," one last desperate attempt to be saved from the rising water was shot down as America held up his hand to tell him to stop.

"I know. I've heard it over and over and over again, I don't need another reminder." He grabbed his shirt off the ground and slipped it on, grabbing his glasses off the nightstand. With his back turned towards Russia, he held his sunglass in his hands, looking down at his reflection.

"I've heard you say you like me, heard you confess, but all of that was when you were drunk. Any actual affection that I thought meant you liked me was always when you were drunk."

The water was filling Russia's throat, preventing him from speaking comprehensible words.

"I thought you told the truth when you were like that. I guess I was wrong." He put on his glass and adjusted them, facing towards the door. "I don't know what to feel anymore, Russia. I don't know what to think. I ask and you shoot me down but then you do all these things for me, treating me as if I were your boy-"

He stopped himself and shook his head, not wanting to finish that thought. "No. I can't do it anymo'r. I jus' can't!"

The darkness of the flood began to consume the room. The only shred of light left stormed out the bedroom door and without a doubt out of the house.

The pressure of the deep pushed onto Russia, making him collapse. It surrounded him, consuming him, eating away at his heart. It forced its way back into his mind, claiming where it once was, taking back its lost territory. He had felt such hope, he felt as if he had a reason to stay above the water. But now in the darkness of it, he was lost.

It lulled him to his bed, to wrap the blanket around him and to not move. He didn't want to move anyway. The pressure was too much. It was breaking him. Like a dam. The final dam within him was breaking and soon enough, it shattered. Water poured through it and streamed from his eyes, dotting the pillow beneath him.

There it kept him and there he chose to stay.

**:)**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades!**

**~Galaxy**

# The Beginning Part 1

**America's POV**

It was bad.

Really fucking bad.

Sitting in the living room, my dad yelling about whatever he was yelling about. I lost interest the moment he told me to wait for him on the couch. Actually, I lost interest when I started heading home. I already knew what was going to happen.

Watching him pace back and forth, mom sitting on one of the chairs making sure nothing got too out of hand, was the only level of attention I was giving the conversation. My brothers upstairs, certainly listening from the stairwell. I was hoping for Aussie to do something, or for one of his animals to get loose so we have something else to focus on. Or Zee having dad distracted for when I walked in so I could have a moment alone. Or even Canada helping me sneak through his bedroom balcony as I had done before.

But no.

Dad made sure he stayed waiting by the door, keeping the others in sight.

"-understand what is at stake here? Your safety, your brother's safety, even! You can't keep doing this son, leaving abruptly while your episodes have been getting worse. We can't risk you having one outside the home now!"

Never? Could it really be never?

"Your brother Canada can manage to stay inside and follow the rules, and he hasn't shown any signs of hallucinations or the episodes you have."

Not even a not right now? That would have been better. What

would make everything better, or at least get close to it, would be if I could just go up into my room and be left alone for the day. Everyone leaving me alone would be perfect.

"Wales was coming here to possibly help cure you!"

I sifted my head to look at my dad when he said that word. Cure? This again? I thought we had moved past that after nothing worked. There is no cure, I can't get rid of them. I gave up. He should too.

"She came here, out of her own time, for you and you couldn't have the same decency to even be here when she did!? She was trying to help you!"

Dad stopped in front of me, narrowed eyes, and the deepest frown I was used to seeing. Mom wasn't even looking at me, only at her feet on the floor.

"Whatever," I grumbled, standing up and becoming eye level with him."Is that all?"

Dad looked at me for a second longer before turning away and adjusting his shirt collar. "That is all."

Without hesitation, I briskly walked out of the room and the stairs. I started running up them, skipping some steps. All I wanted to do was go to sleep for the rest of the year.

When I got to the top of the stairs I saw my three brothers standing there nervously waiting. Figured they were listening in, voices carry in this house like nothing.

Zee stepped forward, trying to say something but I shook my head to stop him. Without a word I walked past them and went straight into my room. I didn't want to say anything that I would regret, so I kept my mouth shut.

Locking my door, I took off my shirt and jeans and threw myself onto the bed.

"Never?"

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When I woke up it was dark out. I didn't even realize I fell asleep, but that's usually how that happens.

The house was fairly quiet, the normal sounds from the neighboring rooms being the only thing I could hear. It took me forever to get the energy to sit up, all I wanted to do was sleep. Sleep and forget.

Honestly, could he really mean never?

I stood up to try and distract myself from it and realized I couldn't do much. My room was pretty trashed and I could clean it, but that was too much work I wasn't in the mood for. And I wasn't in the mood to leave my room as well. The last thing I wanted was to run into my dad.

Why did I even come here?

I should leave. Just for awhile at least. I've got too much swirling around my head to be able to handle another hour-long lecture from my dad. What does he know anyway? I know what's good for myself, I don't need him.

I don't need anybody!

I grabbed my bookbag and dumped out my notebooks and 'lost' homework. I wouldn't need them for a while, not that I used them in the first place. I was an okay country on my own, it was dad who said I should go back and learn some more things. Take the new classes. Always treating me like a kid, like I don't know anything. I was independent, I only came back here cause of my brothers. Not because of him!

Everything I deemed necessary I grabbed and stuffed into my bag; my glasses, an extra pair as well, toothbrush and other health stuff, a few of my games, clothes, my Rainbow Dash plush, and Quizno.

When I put the stuffed animals in my bag I looked at the bear that Russia stole for me. I had him laid gently next to my pillow, the fur brushed neatly around its face to make it's button eyes fully visible. I set my bag down on my bed and carefully picked him up.
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Gingerly, I rubbed my thumb on its cheek, a pit in my stomach rising along with the urge to cry.

No. I can't.

But.

I set the bear down and grabbed my green jacket and slipped on my shoes. I grabbed my bag, slung it over my shoulder, and adjusted my glasses. There the bear sat where I put him down, looking up at me with the black reflective buttons.

"I can't, I'm sorry, I don't want to have a reminder just staring at my face," I said looking at the bear. It didn't respond. "Look, I'll be back, I just need to get away for a while. I swear, I'll be back."

Silence.

"Mmm. . . Fine!"

I picked up the bear and put him in my pocket. Dang thing won the battle of wills. I can't leave him.

As silent as I could, I left my room, locking it with my key, and hurried downstairs. I got to the front door, trying to hurry and open it when a hand was placed on my shoulder.

"Amereeca?"

I turned around and seen New Zealand standing behind me. He fixed his glasses, looking at me then to my bag. He didn't have to guess.

"I'm sorry, I'm just not really in a good place right now and I need to get away." I tried to explain to him, hoping he'd understand and not try to get dad before I left. Zee was one who tried to listen to dad, following his rules just fine and not seeming to really care. He was happy where he was.

Instead of trying to drag me back inside, he wrapped his arms around me and hugged me. It was an awkward hug, only cause I had to avoid getting hit with his damn horns, but one I knew he

meant for comfort.

"Be safe," he said, letting go of me and ruffling my hair.

"I will."

"Is t'ere any cover story ye want us ta tell da?"

"No," I shook my head. "Just tell him I didn't tell you where I was going. Or that you didn't see me leave. Whatever keeps you guys out of trouble."

Zee nodded and looked over his shoulder. I heard noises from the kitchen and stiffened, thinking that it could be dad. A loud bang and some curse words later, I calmed down knowing it was just Australia.

"Ye should go," Zee warned and hurried to the kitchen. I didn't hesitate and quickly ran out the door, running down our long-ass driveway and out into the street. It was cold outside, something I was used to but admittedly almost forgot about.

I didn't stop running until I saw the docks. It was a little bit of a trip all by myself, but I know Ireland owes me a no questions asked. He has his boat he could pick me up with. It was tempting to just take Australia's since it was the fastest, but he would hunt me down and mount me on the wall if I took it without permission. And I wanted to leave now and not wait for a very unlikely yes.

Ireland arrived at the port I was at after a few minutes, trying to be as quiet as he possibly could. I told him it was sort of a stealth operation and I couldn't use my boat. It wasn't even at this port anyway, and I can't even remember where I left it.

His boat was clearly used but well kept, and what looked like a smaller version of a fishing boat. A center console something, I didn't care that much. It was a way out, but not as spacious as I'd hoped.

When I climbed on board, he asked, "where ter?"

I threw my bag down on one of the seats and looked at the port. I

could see the hill that leads to the mansion where I had just come from and frowned at it.

"Take me home."

After a few hours into the voyage, things were calm enough for Ireland to sit down next to me. I didn't ask him to, I was hoping he'd leave me alone so I didn't have to spill anything. Instead, he offered me a can of beer, which I gladly took, and drank out of his can.

"Oi nu dis is a 'no quesshuns asked' thin', but can oi completely ignore dat for a bit?"

I raised a brow at him and pulled back the metal tab and popped the can open. "If you keep these coming, maybe."

Ireland chuckled and pointed his thumb behind him. I glanced over and seen the cooler that was opened and filled with more cans. I nodded and shrugged as my official response.

"So, why so late? Oi wus aboyt ter nod aff meself."

I gave another shrug. "Eh, I just woke up. Took a nap during the day, normal shit."

"Ahh," he took a sip of his beer, looking out at the water in front of us. It was calm, the stars in the sky glimmering off the water. The night looked almost as good as when Russia took me out for the evening. It felt like a date, he even got dressed up. Holding my hand, putting his arm around me, giving me his coat. Stealing that bear.

I rubbed the fur of the bear in my pocket, glancing down at the can. I shouldn't be drinking. Russia shouldn't have been drinking, either. At least not the second time, I guess. At first, it was funny, something we did together just to hang.

Where we just close friends to him then? I didn't believe it. Maybe at first, but how he treated me, the things we did together. It seemed like the pining was mutual, with Russia just hesitant and scared.

Did I make the right choice?

"Hey, wassup? You've been so quiet, an' 'enny made a paddah joke yet." Ireland poked my arm to get my attention. I huffed and took another swig of my drink, trying not to look at him.

"Nothing, just tired, ya' know?"

"Oi smell a fib but I'll leave yer alone." Ireland shifted in his seat and twirled his drink around a little. I glanced over at him, noticing now how roughed up he looked too. Dark circles under his eyes and messy hair, which was not uncommon for him, sure, but it looked more profound and deep. Like he hasn't slept in forever.

"You look like shit, too," I commented.

"Pfft. Didn't tink ye'd see wi' yisser gigs."

I adjusted my glasses and forced a chuckle. "Yeah, ya' know how I am with my eyes."

"Oi git it, sum light condishun or somethin', aye? Oi bet yer ain't got nathin' an' 'ave sum sorta' chip up in dohs things ter play sum crackpot game. Not even payin' attenshun ter what's 'eadin' on raun yer (going on around you)."

I gave a genuine laugh and decided to play along, thankful I didn't have to come up with my own excuse. "Been playing solitaire this entire time buddy."

He laughed with me, patting my back a little too hard. "Den yer won't mind me givin' oyt sum huh?"

I answered after I took a drink. "Rant away my potato loving weirdo."

"Not yer best, but I'll settle for it." Ireland tossed his empty can by his feet and sniffled, looking out to the water. We were barely halfway through with our journey and would arrive somewhere midday tomorrow, I assume at least. The trip is usually about 12 hours, at least it would be on a boat like this. Maybe I could let him stay with me for a bit since I stole a whole day from him.

"Anyway, yer nu how oi towl yer aboyt waaat 'appened between me an' Scotty, roi?"

I nodded.

"Apparently de guy isn't lookin' for a relationship, but is down for a lads wi' benefits type av tin'? Here oi wus, tinkin dat we were together al' dis time, an' yer man 'as de gull ter say dat dis wasn't anythin' serious?

"I can understan' him not wantin' a relationship, oi respect 'imself, but leadin' me on for so long? That's jist a bunch av bullshit!"

I looked at him as he yelled to the sky about his troubles with Scotland, hearing how he felt about it. Being lead on, thinking that there was some sort of relationship when to the other guy there apparently wasn't. Being practically inseparable, a good relationship right there. Just gone. Leaving you with your heart broken and sitting next to someone who understands on a boat in the middle of the night.

"Oi don't understand," he slumped back and held his hands over his face. "Everythin' wus jist perfect den. Den it jist felled apart. Oi stormed oyt av 'is gaff (house), me brah'der bein' a pain in de arse aboyt de whole tin', not givin' two shits aboyt 'oy dis tin' 'ighfalutin me (how this thing affected me). He said yer man scotty wasn't a gran' country, at laest not for me he wasn't."

His accent got really thick when he yelled, but I had been around him enough to understand what he said. My dad was like that with Russia. If I had told him, I have no doubts he'd say the same things to me.

"Nigh we ain't really blatherin' (talking)," Ireland mumbled that last bit and fiddled with his hands. I set my can down, it had been finished but I was still holding onto it, and rested my hand on his shoulder.

"It jist sucks so much, yer nu?" He looked at me, letting his hands fall onto his seat. Before I could even open my mouth to answer him, he said, "no, stall de barl, yer got Russia, roi? Yer don't nu."

I scoffed and that perked his interest. "Apparently not."

After a few minutes of silence, he slowly said, "so waat 'appened?"

"We went on a date, and he didn't use the word date so I guess it wasn't technically, but it felt like it was. Towards the end of the night, we almost kissed and he hugged me instead. So I figured he was just scared of 'the gay'," I held up my hands like claws and turned to Ireland who smiled at my attempt to keep the mood from staying dark.

"Anyways, then later he invites me over for dinner, this time the word date was used and we drank together and he told me that he liked me and we actually kissed!"

Ireland whistled and shook his head. "Still canny believe dat wan is part av 'the gay'," he mocked me.

"Eh, everyone is at least like 1% gay," I joked. "The next morning, he completely flipped. Said he would never like me like that. I got mad cause after everything, it felt like we were finally going to be able to get together. Then all of a sudden, he threw that away! And it felt like he was able to get past the fact that he liked me, a guy, and was just able to be happy, but no!

"I left for a bit and when he called me fucking hammered I felt bad for him, ya' know? So I went over to his house for a bit, he told me he was just scared and didn't know how to handle everything and we went to bed after a little while and then the same damn thing happened! He freaked out and I already knew where it was going so I just left him and went home. Then my dad gave me shit for breaking his house rules again, which didn't help me feel better at all."

"Family 'ill do dat ter yer," Ireland remarked, sitting up more and looking at me.

"Heh. Yeah. I went to bed right after that and when I woke up I came to the docks and called you."

"Shit, dis was really feckin recent huh?"

I nodded and looked at the sky, watching the stars as they twinkled and shimmered. The stabbing pain in my heart hit again and I held back my urge to cry by turning away from the sky and looking back to Ireland.

"After all this time together, I thought there was something more. It really hurts when there isn't huh?"

I hoped I hidden the fact that I was on the verge of tears, but I knew I didn't. Not as well as I had hoped for at least. Ireland moved closer to me and put his arm around my shoulders and looked out at the water with me.

"It really does."

We both sat there for a few seconds before I felt a tear roll down my cheek. I cursed myself, quickly rubbing it away. Ireland must have caught it, how could he not with how close he was, because he asked, "'ey, yer don't 'ave ter hold it in ya' nu?"

"Uh, yeah. I think I really do." I wiped away any tears that were gathering and tried to will them to stop. Of course, it didn't work, but they seemed to have slowed a little bit.

"Hey, oi'm 'ere for yer. Oi nu exactly 'oy dis is, 'oy lonely it can make ya' fale."

I sniffed and turned my head towards him a little. All I could do was nod, not being able to find any words to say.

"How it can make yer jist want sum comfort."

I turned to face him a little more, taking note of his hand that slowly moved to my cheek.

"How it can make yer jist want ter fale loved."

He was right. So when he leaned in closer, I mirrored him until I could feel his breath on me. With little hesitation, I pressed my lips against his. I felt him wrap his arms around my neck to pull me in closer while I grabbed the side of the seat to keep me from falling over. It was desperate, needy, but most importantly empty.

When we broke apart, Ireland was laying under me, his arms around my neck and my hands holding him down. We both were frozen in place for however long, who knew. I didn't know if I should continue with what we had been doing, or if I should just throw myself overbored. What I did know was this was wrong. The bad kind of wrong.

All I could think of was Russia, his smiling face, how he tries to hide his blush whenever he showed any kind of attraction towards me, his protective hold on me, how he saved my life. Him looking into my eyes, those beautiful eyes of his and his smile that I missed more than words could describe.

"I'm sorry, I," I got off of him, standing up and walking away. "I don't know what came over me, I shouldn't have done that."

I heard Ireland sit up behind me and let out a sigh. For a few minutes, all that was between us was the waves and the creaking of the boat as it moved. It was right when I figured I should say something, Ireland spoke up first.

"Can oi ask yer sumthin?"

"I dunno man, shoot."

"Is it bad dat oi only tart aboyt Scotlan'? Not loike in a bad way, jist," he was playing with the palm of his hand when I turned to face him. He wore the same expression as me; one of guilt.

"Oi wish he were da wan 'ere wi' me."

"I could only focus on Russia, actually," I admitted, fiddling with the bear in my pocket again. As soon as I did, I took my hand off of it and forced it by my side. I shouldn't touch it, not after just making out with someone else.

"We really are jist stuck in de mud huh?"

"You can say that again," I muttered, kicking the can that Ireland had tossed down earlier. "I dunno, I feel bad. One for kissing you and two cause it felt sorta like I was cheating. We aren't even dating, and he's told me never but it still feels. . ."

"Bad?"

I nodded.

"Hey, at least we both nu we still loike their dumb arses. If that's a gran' tin', oi don't nu." Ireland stood and walked over to the cooler. He grabbed out another beer and held one out to me. I shook my head no and he put it back, taking his with him back to his seat.

"I guess you're lucky that yours is okay with their sexuality," I muttered sitting down in the seat closest to the end of the boat. "Though I suppose I've been a little too harsh with him. It's not easy questioning something like that."

"Especially wi' a da loike his? Dat country wus such a 'omophobe."

"You're not wrong," I managed a glance at him, feeling a little awkward about what happened. Eye contact shall be avoided from here on out. "I should have been supportive of him, don't you think? He's just scared after all."

Ireland nodded. "He's shuk an' yer were too. Not a gran' combinashun, maybe it wus good yer got oyt av dare whaen yer did. Yer could've said sum. . . 'arsh an' damned words."

I looked down at my feet, knowing very well that that's what happened between Ireland and Scotland. When they had their big fight about their problem, they both said some rather nasty words at each other. They didn't talk for a while. They still aren't on the best of terms. Maybe he was right. Maybe I still had a chance to fix things. I just have to give myself some time to whine down.

After an hour or so of talking and shaking off the kiss, Ireland was ready to pass out. I decided to take over the wheel for him so he could get his sleep before he had to sail back over to his place.

It was more lonely without having someone to talk to, and less exciting now that I was left with my thoughts. I couldn't even focus on the stars after a while since the sunlight coming in started to block out their light. My attention would be caught when I would see the random sea creature breach the water before disappearing

back under its waves.

I thought about fishing a little since this was a small finishing boat, to help pass the time but I didn't know if I could use the equipment. I tried pestering Ireland about it but all he did was complain about the light and turn over and went right back to bed.

Seeing land was the best thing that could have happened, and I resisted the urge to yell 'land ho' since Ireland was still asleep. I would wake him up when we docked if he didn't wake up by then at least. It was a long walk back to my house, by the looks of it. This port was closer to Canada's territory, the name I can't remember at the moment. Something about beer probably, I bullshited the names of a lot of things on my land.

I hadn't had to use this port in forever, since I've been staying with my dad, so it took me a while to find where I kept the extra fuel. I wanted to make sure that Ireland had enough gas to get himself back home. Only fair, seeing how I had him use some getting here. I'll pay him for it later.

After I refilled Ireland's tank for him, I nudged him awake. I offered him a place to sleep at my house but he said he'd be fine. He'd rather get going so that no one could notice he's gone, he said. I could still tell from him avoiding eye contact that he felt embarrassed still. About as much as me.

The walk home was long and boring and I called Germany for a lot of it, just cause I needed someone to talk to. I told him what happened between me and Russia, what happened at my dad's (including the parts I didn't tell Ireland), and where I was going. He followed along and he said he knew something happened between me and Russia from what Poland told him.

Nosy country getting into peoples business. That's my thing!

Still, I digress.

He told me he wanted to get a few of his stuff from his house and wanted me to go with him since he was still scared to go alone and he didn't want to ask anybody else. I told him I would in a few

days, that I just need to get away from everybody for a little bit. Knowing how he could be, I also emphasized that it was nothing he did.

When he hung up I scrolled through my contacts to try and find someone else to bother for a little while. Just so I had another voice in the house since I was only a few minutes away. I paused, stopping mid-step when Russia's contact came into view.

I was harsh to him.

He's scared, I can't blame him. I was like that too, stuck in denial. It's not easy at all.

I had to apologize.

I swiped to call him and held the phone to my ear, standing still.

It went to voicemail and I tried again. After a few more tries, I decided to give up for right now. I'll try to call him again later. Or maybe not. He wouldn't want to talk to me, I don't know why I thought it was a good idea to try.

I decided to just get home and find my eagles to cuddle and mope about with. It has been a while since I've seen them, what with me being under lockdown and the fact that they aren't allowed at my dad's anymore. I swear his rules he only enforces them with me. Everyone else gets a free pass, including Australia who brings in *actual* dangerous animals, while I don't. It was that one time!

Liberty and Dakota were my pet bald eagles. Liberty has been with me for as long as I could remember, which is not the best analogy considering my memory. She's my national bird, is what I mean. Every country has a national animal and bird that they can summon when they need to. Most don't do it because why would they? Some of their animals are dangerous and haven't been properly trained so they become more a threat than help. But not Liberty. Buffy is a different story though.

The moment I had Liberty, I trained her. I can't remember much about how, I just know I did. She's bigger than the average size for

a bald eagle, cause she's my national bird, and is highly intelligent. She's beautiful, fast, powerful, dangerous, and kind of a prick. A good representation of me, if I do say so myself.

Dakota, I found recently. Canada and I were walking in the woods exploring around when I spotted her on the forest floor. She was young, barely able to fly, and on the ground curled up against a tree. Canada tried to find a nest nearby while I checked to see if she was still alive, but we weren't by any. She was injured, her leg sustaining most of the damage with her wing bleeding. We took her back to my place and I helped nurse her back to health. The problem was we had to amputate her leg, it had become infected and almost killed her. We tried to save it but determined it would have caused more health issues for her later down the road and I didn't want to risk her life. So the leg had to go. But now she's better than ever, flying around with one leg and a peg leg when she lets me put it on her. She'd be happy to be in her pirate costume with it on.

I missed my girls. They'd know when I was in the area, at least Liberty would, so they would come back to my house when they could. I'd prefer their company right now though, being able to hunt with them, watching TV with them, or just have them cuddle up with me as I slept and/or cried.

The highlight of my day.

When I got to my house I was relieved to finally sit down and relax. It had been a while since I've come home. I normally come back whenever I need to get away from everybody and just feel similar to not existing for a while. My house was not that big, at least to me it wasn't. It was painted white, so it was a white house so to speak, and two stories with a few extra rooms that act as guest rooms now that most of my stuff was at my dad's. I allowed anybody to stay at my place, as long as they told me when they did. The only country that got a free pass on that was Mexico since he was the one that stayed there the most.

I had a large garden in the back with a long rectangular pond that had a mini version of the Washington monument at the end, along with a few other landmarks around as decorations. Naturally, I need

to show off my patriotism. As long as it was aesthetically pleasing, im not having my house look like my flag threw up on it. It's only like that on my birthday.

I was tempted to sit on my porch swing and just take in the view I got from it for a while. Open fields that had a path that leads to a lake, a few scattered trees that grew more condense at the edge of the open yard, leading into the forest. Liberty and Dakota must be out there somewhere, hunting, having fun. I had a lot of back roads that would go off of the main road that all lead to certain places across my territory. The main road connected to my house and a basically abandoned beach house by the ocean. I offer that one out to people and stay there for vacations but it's usually left alone more.

"Welcome home America," I said to myself as I unlocked my door and went inside. I kicked off my shoes and breathed in, taking in the nostalgia and the sweet scent of home. Pine, a bit of dust, a hint of smoke, and some peppers. Wait that last one isn't right. Peppers? That smell is fresh, too.

I looked around, walking into my kitchen to see that there were some dirty dishes in the sink. I recognized that smell, this was something Mexico made. He must be here, I realized. Figuring I should make myself known, I went to the living room to see if he was there and knew he had to be when I heard the sound of my tv on.

"Hey, Mex!" I greeted him when I walked into the living room. He was sitting on the couch, his back faced to me. Beside him were two other countries, and I paused when I noticed them. All three of them jumped from their seats, spinning themselves around to face me. I instantly recognized the other two, Agave and Luna, Mexico's siblings. Agave was covered in what looked like Cheeto dust, clutching a bag in his hand while Luna was scolding him in Spanish about the mess.

When I got a good look at Mexico they became the least of my worries.

"America! Hola! Uh. Look, I know you said im not supposed to have

anyone else over of you didn't give them the okay first, but I couldn't get ahold of you, and I figured it would be okay if they didn't touch or break anything, I mean you know Luna she wouldn't let that- are you okay?"

Mexico stopped his rambling when he noticed that I was staring at him wide-eyed with my mouth agape. I was frozen, my vocals not working properly. I hadn't even really heard him, only registered he was talking.

I've known him for so long, how could I have not known?

"You, you," I gasped out running my hand through my messy hair. "You have wings!"

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**Narrator's POV**

Belarus knocked on Russia's bedroom door again, hoping that this time he would open it. She hoped each time and so far hasn't gotten any response other than the "get out" or "leave me alone".

"Россия, у меня есть ланч для тебя! (Russia, I have lunch for you!)" She called holding his portion on a plate.

The silence stirred the worry in her gut. He was alive, Belarus knew that for sure. When they brought up his food for him, he would take it and then leave the empty plates by his door. But only when no one was outside his door. And he knew when no one was waiting, too. Ukraine had waited by his door for an hour before giving up.

"Россия, ты можешь мне сказать, почему ты не выходишь? (Russia, can you tell me why you haven't come out?)"

"уходи, (Go away,)" came a loud weak groan.

Belarus sighed and set the plate down. She's had a headache for the longest time now, she wasn't mentally equipped to take care of him. She was barely taking care of herself, feeling as if her headache would split her head in two. Armenia was helping her cook since she insisted she at least does that for everybody, so he tried to take
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it upon himself to help out Russia, too.

He didn't get anywhere either tho.

Russia refused to leave his room unless it was for food or if he knew no one else was in the house. He wanted to stay in bed forever, the comforter living up to its name very poorly but better than anything else right now.

He had heard his sister leave and thought about standing up to get his food but argued with himself against that. The bed was better. His legs were heavy. His heart was crushed cause no one but himself.

He wasn't hungry anyway.

That was the lie he told himself at least to try and get more reasons to not get up. But he needed to. He had things to do, he had to go and fix things before it was too late. He still had time, it had only been a day or so. Russia needed to take a step on his own now, no one could hold his hand any longer.

Not physically at least. There wasn't much a ghost could do there. It took a lot of energy to influence emotions, something that a persistent Russian can easily ignore. Maybe drop a few things here or hide some others. Seriously, Russia? A kids show? That's too silly for a date. And a tracksuit? That was not proper attire.

These complaints were left unheard by everyone. Soviet was aware of that. He had gotten used to no one hearing him or seeing him. He sat at the foot of Russia's bed now, his son completely oblivious. He hadn't taken a lot of time when he was alive to focus on his children's needs, a fault he wished he corrected when he was alive. Perhaps if he did, his son wouldn't be in a situation like this.

It was all certainly traced back to him, he knew. What he chose to focus on when raising Russia and the others were things he had to learn himself, or prioritized based on his relationship with his father. The system of blame never just falls on one person, it can always be traced back farther than anyone would want to admit. Perhaps it's because if they did, they would realize the flaw in their

ways of blaming another. It's not just one person's fault, not one easy scapegoat, but rather a web that most certainly always connects to the one pointing the blame, too.

It was a flaw Soviet was well aware of but from time to time ignored as well. It is rather much easier to blame his actions on how he was raised and neglected in his childhood. But again, it was futile. It didn't matter in the end. What did matter was that he failed to stop himself from becoming his father.

Now his son suffered because of him, and what looks like to be the same fate as him.

"сын, ты не можешь продолжать лежать тут. ты должен встать! (Son, you can't keep laying here. You need to get up!)" Soviet stood, making no noise, and stood in front of Russia. His eyes were glazed over, his look empty. He had no emotion on his face, the only sign of one was the occasional tear that dripped down onto his pillow.

"иди и поговори с Америкой, расскажи о своих чувствах! не будь как я! (Go talk to America, admit your feelings! Don't be like me!)"

Soviet had gotten used to the fact that Russia liked America. Even as a kid, Russia was fascinated with America. They had a bond when he was younger and Soviet was a new dad. America had helped him get used to taking care of a child, some of his advice he ignored out of pride, a fool's mistake. But he was always like that with America. He would never admit it, but he was jealous of the country. He had stolen much of his father's attention, treating him as if he were his son, while regularly forgetting Soviet.

But after what happened, America barely remembers. A few fond memories, but now he thinks their relationship was just political. Allies helping allies, nothing more. Soviet always regretting shooting him. As much as he despised and argued with him, they were almost like brothers. Friends, at least.

But because of his mistake, he lost that. He couldn't let Russia make the same mistake.

"Россия, слушай меня, пожалуйста, ради любви с Маркс, просто выслушай меня. (Russia, listen to me, please for the love of Marx, just hear me.)" Soviet pleaded, hoping whatever deity out there–he didn't know what to believe now that he was a ghost–would help him get his son to hear him. "я знаю, ты все еще следуешь моим наставлениям, но для твоего же блага тебе нужно остановиться. (I know you still follow my orders, but for your own good you need to stop.)"

Russia had always followed Soviet without question. This was common knowledge. It's a reason some countries are scared of him and try to avoid him. Who knows if his dad had given him some secret plan to take out half the world. Russia would do anything to make sure his father's missions were completed.

Even as a kid he would do the same. Doing anything he could for his father's praise. When Soviet and America entered the cold war, Russia didn't hesitate to follow his father. Trying to follow in his footsteps to one day become a 'big strong country like his dad'.

But that meant listening to the words Soviet yelled out of heartbreak and anger. Taking each one to heart. Children are like that. They listen better than any adult does. Their mind is willing to take whatever knowledge it can grab, whatever seems important to their survival they take it in and hold onto it as the basis of their own being. Children can be described as a glass. Fragile, prone to getting cracked, chipped or even completely shattered. The best of parents or parent are not free from leaving a mark that can ruin a perfect glass, even if it is just a smudge or a fingerprint.

Soviet had carried many glasses and didn't allowed anyone else to hold them for him, which lead to many of them breaking.

Of course, it doesn't happen always instantly. The worse of it is when the child slowly breaks. Small cracks at first when you think all you left was a smudge. But now Soviet could see he left more than that. And now he was powerless to do anything but watch as the shards began to fall.

**Is having The Begining in two parts sorta ironic? Or do I not know what irony means. Doesn't matter. I actually have a fun**

**idea that I have been thinking about but someone suggested it to me and I guess that was the nail on the coffin. Wait that's not the right analogy. Heh. A-nail-ogy. Ahhh I'm going to hell.**

**Anyway, I'm going to do a little Q & A! You can ask any character anything and they'll answer it. I don't know if it'll be written out or drawn, but whichever one it'll for sure be posted here so no worries. And I may not be able to answer all your questions so I apologize beforehand.**

**Ask your questions here so it's easier for me to get them all!**

**That's all for now folks!**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# The Begining Part 2

**Narrator's POV**

"Luna, don't do that you'll kill him!"

"Don't tell me what to do!"

"I'd love it if you two argued without a knife to my throat!"

After America saw Mexico's wings, who hadn't expected America to come home and figured it'd be safe for him to stretch them out a little, Luna pounced. She grabbed out her pocket knife, jumped over the couch, and pinned America down on the ground, his arms held tightly behind his back and his legs pinned down by Luna's heeled boot. She held a knife to his throat and started telling Mexico and Agave to help hold him down.

Mexico and Agave decided that the best thing to do was to talk her down.

"He saw your wings Mexi," Luna kept her knife steady and glanced at Mexico who was too scared to move any closer. "You know the stories, we can't risk anyone knowing."

"But, he's not like that, you should know!"

"We don't know for sure! He could take advantage of you, just like he did before!"

"That was forever ago, he's not the same person as he was then remember?"

"If I may interrupt," America winced as he felt the blade get closer to his throat. "It sounds like you two need to go over this some more, so I can wait outside while you guys talk it over."

Luna pulled on his hair and he winced from the pain. He knew that wouldn't have worked, but it was worth a try.

"Shut up, you won't be getting out of this you bastard," Luna growled and America nervously smiled up at her.

"Luna, please, we can just talk about this with him, we don't have to kill him," Agave tried to reason, trying not to panic and break down in tears. "Right, Mexi?"

"Yeah! I know America, Luna," Mexico kneeled in front of America and his sister. "He's an idiot but he won't say anything. Right, Ame?"

"Oh yeah, no, mouth shut, not a word to anybody," he scrambled out to say through gritted teeth. He was desperately trying to keep his head up away from the knife but also to keep his shades from sliding off. The last thing he wanted was to have them see his eyes. He could not handle that mental weight right now.

"Do I have your word?" Luna tightened her grip on his hair.

"Yes! Yes, you have my word! Can you please stop doing that!"

Luna looked to her younger siblings, giving in to their silent pleads to let him go. She sighed, taking the knife away from America's throat and getting off of him. He scrambled to his feet, holding his neck and leaning against the doorframe, trying to catch his breath.

"I'm so sorry, we can leave if you want," Mexico waved for his younger brother to get closer to the other two, allowing America more room to breathe.

"Nah, ya'll can stay. I get it, why she attacked I mean," America rubbed his eyes and adjusted his glasses so they didn't see anything he didn't want them to. "It must be scary having someone find out something you've been hiding for years."

"You speak from experience," Luna commented, noticing his voice and expression. "Been around for 500 years, right? Of course, you are hiding something," she stepped closer to America, who instinctively pressed himself against the wall to keep the distance they had between them.

"Luna, I don't think-" Mexico was silenced when Luna held up her

hand.

"What are you hiding, America?" The eldest sibling narrowed her eyes at him as America began to nervously sweat.

"I. I don't know what you mean," he swallowed the huge lump in his throat. How could he look more suspicious, he thought.

"Yeah, you do. And since you know Mexico's secret, it's only fair that we know one of yours."

"But, I-I won't tell anyone, I swear! I'll pinky promise and everything."

"You break promises."

"Okay!" Mexico broke through the tension, pulling Luna away from America. "That's enough, please. He gave us his word, and *he* would never break a pinky promise."

"Y-yeah, cross my heart, hope to pie, stick a cupcake in my eye," America did the appropriate motions to the Pinkie Pie promise. Then straightened himself out and tried to steady his heartbeat once more. Luna was normally protective over her siblings and could be a little agro sometimes, but he hadn't seen her like this. Not towards him at least. It was terrifying having a knife to his throat again.

"Luna, you need to relax," Agave took his sister's hand and started pulling her to the couch. She resisted, glaring at America but then followed her little brother.

"Can I talk to you in the kitchen?" Mexico asked, giving a look to his sister. America nodded and the two walked out of the Livingroom, America feeling Luna's eyes still trained on him.

"I am so sorry, you know how Luna can get," Mexico immediately said when they passed the threshold into the room.

"I know. I just," America rubbed his lips and looked at Mexico's wings again. "You've had these and, and I never knew?"

"Well, you did know, but then," Mexico quieted himself, avoiding

eye contact. America's eyes widened when he realized what he had meant. He had died. All his personal memories of that were gone. He had known about Mexico's wings. Did he find out by trust or by force, was the more important question.

"I didn't," his voice died as he prayed he hadn't done anything nefarious to Mexico. Maybe that's why Luna was desperate to get him, or even possibly kill him if she needed to. But Agave hadn't been scared, but maybe he was too stunned to be.

"No, I-I told you. I was hurt, and you saved me," Mexico rubbed his wing, presumably where he had been hurt. Relieved was an understatement for America, he had leaned against the counter as he let out a sigh. He didn't want to ask further, since he saw how uncomfortable Mexico looked about the subject. Whatever it was that made him uncomfortable, anyone's guess was as good as America's.

A country's death was a subject many avoid, as anyone would. Its uncertainty was less about when would death come, but what would happen afterward. If the nation the country represents still thrives while the personification dies, then they are essentially reset. Who they were dies, their memories, what made them who they were locked away. Their memories are replaced with historically accurate ones with accompanying feelings. Some memories may remain, some lingering emotions that can feed into unexplainable fears or little intrusive thoughts that seem to suggest a past event.

But the finale end, that's even more uncertain. No country can predict that nor explain why some countries that have been around for more than 500 years still exist longer than a country that has barely made it past a century.

What makes a countries death harder to deal with, is seeing a person you once loved and who could have once loved you walking around without a clue of who you were to them or the memories that you shared. It's not the same if you try to restart the same relationship with them, either. They aren't the same person. Perhaps different interests, slight changes in their personality, but enough to know that it isn't them anymore.

Mexico knew what it was like on that side. Watching someone you loved forget everything you two had built and walk away. Sharing turned into stealing and then all you had left was the fear of losing someone like that again. And a very overprotective sister who would attack the person if they had ever hurt Mexico again.

"Does Canada know?"

Mexico looked up at America. He had lifted himself up to sit on the kitchen counter, avoiding eye contact by digging in his cupboard for something to eat.

"What?"

"About your wings? Does he know?"

"Yeah. He's known for a while," Mexico climbed up onto a counter that sat parallel to America. "It's hard to keep a secret from him anyway."

"Yeah,"-America pulled out a bag of chips and opened them-"and if you like him you better not keep any secrets away from him."

"Wait, what," Mexico's face flushed red and America burst out laughing.

"I see the way you look at him, and how you look at his girl when they hold hands," he crunched on a few chips before adding, "it's obvious."

"If it's so obvious why hadn't Canada noticed?"

America looked up from his bag and seen Mexico slumped forward with his wings curled around him. How he's managed to keep those a secret for as long as he had, America couldn't guess. The same way he's kept his eyes a secret for as long as he has, he supposed.

"Canada may be smart, but he's also an idiot," America joked to hopefully lighten the mood. He frowned when he saw that it did little to make Mex smile. "You know. You didn't hear from me, but they aren't even dating."

"What?" Mexico perked his head up, baffled at what he had said.

America shrugged. "Eh, gossip flows around like nothing. Plus I always have some on the listen for it."

"I don't care about your gossip girls or whatever, what happened? Did she break up with him? Is he okay?"

"Yeah, he's fine. I mean they weren't dating in the first place."

"What?"

Mexico tuned out America's explanation, one he probably should have listened to, and started reviewing things in his head. Ukraine hadn't been over to visit Canada in months, Mexico knew that for sure since he was usually there himself. He's never seen them on an actual date, not in a while. If they hadn't been dating, why would they pretend? Maybe something on Ukraine's part. Canada would always help the best he could, even if it would mean faking a relationship.

Wait. That would mean Canada is single. Mexico can say something to him about it!

Kaz is Ukraine's brother. Oh no. He would probably know, too, since America knows. That would explain why he was getting closer to him, trying to steal him right from under Mexico's nose! He had already known, while Mexico hadn't. He can't waste any more time, he needs to talk to Canada now!

"America, I need to talk to Canada! Do you know where he is?"

America, who had been saying how what he was told is just speculation with what feels like circumstantial evidence, jumped at Mexico's outburst. "Uh, last I checked still at home. Why?"

"I need to talk to him. I have to tell him how I feel!"

"Whoa, taco, slow down."

"No burger, you gotta speed up."

"No, listen Mex, now is defiantly not a good time to spill everything. There is too much pressure on him right now."

"But-"

"I'm serious. I know it's hard, but you have to wait."

Mexico sighed and leaned against the counter. "Okay. I'll wait. I don't want to stress him out."

"Good boy," America patted Mexico's head as he started to walk towards the stairs. "I'm going to my room, so please don't burn the place down."

"Don't want history to repeat itself huh?"

"Oh haha, my brother burned my house down, fuck off," America mocked the joke and Mexico laughed at him. He barely remembers that event, but now he and Canada joke about it a little bit. They both were firebugs, just Canada took it a step further then. As much as he did like fire, it still made America nervous. Just how it can be uncontrollably sometimes, and not to mention how it had recently burned a lot of Australia's land and almost took him with it. Of course, he would be nervous about it.

It's not like there was any other reason for it. Not that America could remember, at least.

Of course, if there was anyone who did remember, they would never say it. Maybe the past should die. No one is the same as they were back then anyway. Why would anyone bring up something so horrific?

That is, on purpose at least. Now if an accident were to happen, that would be a different story.

As America was getting ready for sleep, he looked out the window and couldn't help but think about the first personal memories he had. His chest hurt like a bitch and it was hard to breathe at first. His father was there, sitting beside his bed. He had cried when he woke up, almost tackling him in a hug. It was a gunshot that he had come back from. A stray bullet, they had guessed. Britain came to

the conclusion that it had been from German Empire. Shortly after that, America declared war on him and entered WW1.

Of course, that moment never sat well with him.

But what was he to do? He was shot at and had died. He wasn't in the war before and didn't want to be, so he couldn't sit back then. But that wasn't why it didn't sit well. He felt like he was missing something, someone maybe.

He couldn't know. If he had kept any records or anything from his past life, he couldn't find them. He had searched his whole house and they were gone. So he moved on. Left the feeling behind. Restarted life. It's not good to wonder who you were before. At least that's what America thinks. You'll never know for sure, and it can make you go crazy thinking about if what's happening to you is karma. Or if the person you are talking to right now could have possibly killed you in the past.

It's best to ignore it.

A loud shrill interrupted America's thoughts and he looked up at the sky. Among the colors of the setting sun, he saw two birds in the sky, soaring closer. A smile crept onto his lips and he laughed out loud.

"There's my girls!" America excitedly opened the window, backing away to let his eagles have more room to land. The idea in his head was for them to come in and land on his empty desk or his bed. Instead, they flew directly at him, talons out, and knocking him to the ground. Their claws had dug into his skin a bit, but America didn't care. It was like a cat owner used to their cat using their arms or legs as scratching posts.

Just a little more painful.

Liberty and Dakota nuzzled America's chin as he laid on the floor laughing. He stroked their backs and rubbed the tops of their heads, petting them and talking to them in a baby voice. Liberty was significantly bigger than Dakota and bigger than any bald eagle. National animals tend to be bigger and are almost immortal.

Dakota laid down on America's chest, trying to keep her balance by leaning on Liberty until she was able to lay down properly. Her effort was deemed useless when America held them both close to him before standing up. He set them on his bed, turning towards the window to shut it but paused.

It was getting darker early. At his fathers' it's hard to tell when it's winter because it's normally always cloudy and rainy. But looking out at the fields, the empty trees, the early evening, you could see it was winter. The snow looked as if it had melted, with a few patches of it here and there, but other than that it was just dying grass.

Dying. It seems to be everywhere in America's mind today.

He shut the window and closed the curtains, turning back to his bed. He didn't care about changing his clothes and instead climbed into his bed, lifted his blanket so the two eagles could situate themselves under the blanket if they wanted to, and got comfortable himself.

His sleep was dreamless, his body guarded by the two birds that curled around each other, pressed up against America's chest. It was quiet in the house.

Mexico, Luna, and Agave were in their designated sleeping spots, Agave being the only one struggling to sleep with his brother's wing hitting his face every twenty seconds. After a hard elbow to the side, and a few strong words the problem was solved.

All was still after that.

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"Holy fuck! I didn't know you could do that!"

Mexico smiled as he soared in the air, doing aerial tricks with Dakota. The two winged beings dove, zigzagged, spiraled, and spun in various patterns, dizzying and dazzling America on the ground. He looked up in awe at the two flying about, his second eagle perched on his shoulder. Liberty would always watch the two fly in the air, practicing tricks but would never partake in them.
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"It's so much better now that you know. It hurts trying to hide my wings all the time!" Mexico called down as he began to descend and pick a landing spot. He landed down on the ground, the frosted over grass and dirt making a loud crunch as he did. "My vest at least helps me hide them a bit."

"How does it though? That seems like it would be harder." America asked, remembering how he usually dressed so loose because of the heat of his home.

Mexico explained how he can tuck his wings in a little and restrain them using a harness his sister had made for him. It felt like wearing a straight jacket which is why he hated it and tried to use other things, but it kept them hidden well enough. Plus, when he was over at the European District he could always cover up with a jacket and run with the excuse that he was cold.

The four of them ate lunch together, Luna giving America the occasional look but acting close to normal with him. Agave would feed Dakota, dropping bits of his cooked fish on the ground for her to eat, as if she were the family dog. Now normally, the parent or head of the house would advise against it, but America was doing it too.

"So, no one's been giving you any more shit for wearing a skirt, right?" America asked, turning towards Agave. The little boy looked up from his plate and shook his head for a response. The last time someone was teasing him for wearing a skirt, America almost fought the country. That was a few years ago, but now and then a comment or stare would arise and he and Luna would confront whoever they needed to.

Russia had been one of those countries. He was looking at Agave when he was with Mexico, Canada, and America while they were all shopping, and was whispering to his sister Moldova. America of course confronted him and asked him what was up, assuming he was judging him for what he chose to wear. Russia had ignored America, brushing past him to ask Agave where he got his skirt. Turns out, his sister really liked it and wanted to get one herself but didn't want to intrude. Russia hadn't cared and Agave, who had been scared, happily told him that Luna had made it for him.

That was one of those moments when America had begun to dislike Russia less, before they had to work on the project that is.

It was that memory that America played through his head while he ate. Seeing him almost expressionless with a monotone voice then was the norm. Now that he has seen him laugh, cry, yell, and even be scared, that mental snapshot seemed . . . off. He didn't fit into that cookie-cutter form of an aggressive loner. He may not have had as many friends or allies as America, but he had a bigger family. Deeper connections with the few he enjoyed being around and loyalty that many would try all their life to earn.

America checked his phone and saw that Russia had left him on read again.

He was still reading his messages. So he was still alive. That reassured him. He knew he should have been more empathetic, trying to see this from Russia's point of view, but he couldn't stop himself from getting angry. If he really cared, wouldn't he text him back? Or at least say something, or do something. America wanted to believe he did, and this wasn't him reading everything wrong. Or worse, being used.

When America checked his messages again, he saw he had gotten one from Germany.

*G-Man- Hey, your dad stopped here looking for you.*

Of course.

*Cool Dude- Is he gone?*

*G-Man- Yeah, he left a few minutes ago. Where are you again?*

*Cool Dude- U already know pls I can't say over text.*

*G-Man- Right. I forgot, I apologize.*

America squinted at his phone, thinking that his language felt off. What if his father was there still? What if he had Germany's phone and was texting him? Germany would listen to Britain as much as he would listen to America. Especially if Britain told him the reason

he needed to stay home, Germany would side with him.

His paranoia taking control of him, he decided to face-time Germany to see if he was right. Germany picked up rather quickly and America immediately scanned the background. He was in Poland's Livingroom.

"Hey, vu okay? Vu looked vorried." Germany asked, holding his phone screen closer to him.

Everyone at the kitchen table was looking at America, wondering why he was calling someone while they were eating. When Germany had pointed out how nervous America looked, they realized it, too. Luna assumed the worst, holding her knife tight in her hand, and waited for America to rat out her brother.

"Pan aroun' the room. Now." America demanded in a low voice, his grip tight on his phone. Germany hurried and did as asked, showing off an empty Livingroom.

"B-Boland is in zee kitchen. Vat's koing on?"

"Is mah dad there?"

"Vat?"

"Is mah dad there!"

Germany jumped at the sudden increase of volume in his voice. "N-n-nein, nein, he's not. America, vat's koing on, vere are vu? Are vu okay?"

America lowered his head, forgetting about the others at the table. His shout hadn't just startled Germany, but everyone else. Agave had jumped from his seat to stand next to Mexico, who held his wing around his brother and Luna held the knife tightly in her hand, ready for America's next move. When he looked up and glanced past the phone to see the trio as they were, he sat up and cleared his throat.

"America?"

"I'm sorry, I just," he rubbed his eyes under his glasses. "I thought my dad was there, texting me instead of you. I'm at my house, Mex, Luna, and Agave are here with me."

Germany nodded and swallowed the lump in his throat. He wanted to say something but resisted that urge. If anything he was taught as a young kid that if someone is stressed, talk as little as possible. You don't want to anger them more than they are. It'll keep the screaming to a minimum. You'll get hurt less then.

Silence fell on everyone, Agave slowly moving back to his seat. Dakota was still under the table and nudged his hand for another piece of fish.

"America," came Poland's voice off-camera.

"Yeah?"

"I want you to come here."

"What?"

Germany moved over, allowing Poland into view. After a few seconds of them getting situated, Poland answered, "for your own good, I want you to come here. Stay with us. Something is clearly going on with you at home and with Russia, and I want you to sit down with me."

"I don't really need to," America tried to say before Poland cut him off.

"Yes, you do. You are avoiding your problems, literally running away. Please come stay with us so you can talk to someone because I know you are not talking to anyone there. Am I right?"

"Yeah, he hasn't said anything," Mexico ratted him out. America gave him an expression that meant 'what the fuck' and Mexico shrugged at him. "Sorry amigo, but you do have some issues you need to talk about.

"But, my dad, he's-"

"Not going to come back here. He's already been here, and we can tell him to stay off my property if I need to."

America groaned and chewed on a French fry.

"Ame, blease. I'm vorried," Germany leaned closer to the camera. "If vu won't do it for vu, zen come offer for me. I need vur help, rememper?"

With a sigh, America slowly nodded. "Okay. I guess I can stay for a few."

"Thank you," Poland said. "Mexico? Was that you?"

"Si."

"Can you make sure he gets here?"

"Si, I can do that."

"Thank you."

"Ve'll zee vu zoon, Ame," Germany got America to look back at the screen. He silently nodded and looked at Mexico, seeing him feeding Dakota. Her head poked out from under the table a little as she wanted to get on the table and have at the meal, but was trying not to. "Zoon, okay?"

"I could get there in two hours if I need to, G-man," America rolled his eyes and whistled for Dakota to come to him. She jumped up, her wings smacking Mexico and Agave as she propelled herself into the air. He pushed his plate towards her and she immediately dove for the scraps of fish he had. Liberty, who had been watching from her perch in the Livingroom, flew quickly to the plate and started trying to take the fish from Dakota.

"Zat vould pe petder (better). I know vu vant to affoid your dad, und you know he might check there." Germany warned.

"Heh," America chuckled looking at his two eagles picking his plate clean. "I have two little birdies who say otherwise."

"Ame, can you get them off the table?" Luna asked, poking her head around Liberty, who had begun to take interest in her food. She lifted her plate and held it away, but Liberty kept trying to see what was on the plate, or rather see if she could quickly get it before Dakota did.

"Oh yeah, sorry," America whistled, both birds looking up at him. "Little Crewmate."

Dakota flew towards America, landing on his chest so that he could hold her as he would with a cat, while Liberty land in his outstretched arm. He held his phone towards his face the best he could and said, "I'll get there later today, though, don't worry."

"I alvays vorry."

"Okay, well don't worry about this."

"I can't make bromizes I can't keep," Germany joked. America laughed a little, turning to let Dakota and Liberty sit on the couch. He told them to stay there and went upstairs to gather his things back in his bag. They hung up after a few minutes so that America could get ahold of someone who could get him back to the European District asap.

The phone ringed, America tapping his foot to fill the silence and steady his need to move.

"Hello?" The recipient answered.

"Hey," America perked his head up and looked out his window. "NATO, you got a minute?"

~~~~~~~~~~

"I shouldn't be doing this."

"I didn't ask for the submarine."

"You said fast and hidden."

"Fair enough I guess."
~~~~~~~~~~

America was still happy about the submarine. He hadn't been in one in a long time, since there were major restrictions for things like that now. Few countries had access to any sort of submarine, and even then it was highly monitored, needed to be chaperoned, and the reason had to be absolutely necessary. Hitching a ride was not counted as absolutely necessary.

Luckily NATO had access to almost everything and wasn't restricted like regular countries where. Even when he does use his resources to do things America asks-he's the only one who ever does-him to, he always documents it as he would if it was a regular job. It's the only reason UN lets him get away with it.

The use of a submarine might be pushing his limits, though.

True to its use, they did arrive in only two hours. Of course, they had to be quiet and America waited in NATO's office as he documented the length of his trip, where he went, what time he had arrived, etc. It was all boring, but at least America kept himself entertained by talking to NATO. It's not often they could sit down and talk. Even from the beginning, he was busy.

Federations like NATO or even UN didn't have time to grow up like countries or some other unions before them, especially considering the circumstances. They were created in times of chaos to represent hope and unity, and they needed that then. NATO was the best line of defense they had against Soviet if he ever did anything, having the strength and power from being a true Union. Technically an organization, but the words have the same overall meaning. The power was derived from a willful unification of countries.

Of course, now that Soviet had passed, NATO's main goal is to keep all of his members safe from malicious intent. But that had become less of a worry now that everyone was seemingly okay with one another. The major problems could have been Russia and America fighting, which one could say they are currently in. But it's not a fight-fight.

America hoped at least. He'd angry and very conflicted, yes, but he doesn't hate Russia. He still wants to be his friend. If that's even a possibility. The answer isn't looking too good with how Russia has

been ghosting him.

"Hey, little soldier?"

NATO glanced over at America as they walked to his car. Little soldier was a nickname that America gave to NATO almost from the moment he was created.

"Did you hear anything about Russia?"

"No. Is there something you needed me to find out?"

"No, it's fine. I just was curious," America avoided looking at NATO in case he was giving him a questioning look. He liked hearing gossip about other countries from him, a thing that he would share upon America's request, but would rarely rant to the guy. One of his jobs is part of surveillance, so it was natural he'd know about the drama between countries, but anything he thought was serious he'd always report back to UN or anyone else he thought was necessary. And he's no doubt heard that his father was looking for him, so anything he tells him he would have to tell someone about it.

The less he knows right now, the best.

Instead of talking about himself, America asked about other countries. NATO, happy to fill the silence, told him anything he knew wasn't too personal. Finland is thinking about proposing to Estonia (they talked about that for a while), Greece and Turkey almost got into another fight again, North Korea still thinks it was America who stole his wallet (it was but he can't prove it), Azerbaijan and Armenia are not talking to each other and EAEU and EU are watching them.

That's going to make for a very awkward family reunion, America thought.

Germany was waiting on Poland's front step when NATO arrived with America. He ran to the truck they were in before anyone could get out and asked, "Hey, could ve go to mein house? Zo vu could help me vith zome of mein stuff?"

"Yeah totally, is that alright my guy?" America asked NATO. He

nodded and Germany hopped in the back seat, buckling up. "Hey,"- America turned and leaned against his seat to look back at Germany- "did you hear that Finland is planning on proposing to Estonia?"

"Really!?"

NATO told Germany what he heard as they drove to his house. Estonia doesn't know, but he's proposing soon. Don't know how soon or where, but Germany promised to keep it a secret. He would only tell Poland, and Poland could keep a secret.

When they got to Germany's house, America was the first one to get out. Of course, when he noticed Germany wasn't next to him, he turned around confused. He was still in the truck, looking out the window with wide eyes and a nervous frown. His house looked darker, but that could have been because of the time day it was. He hasn't been back in a long time, avoiding the street altogether.

His window rolled down and he jumped back, suddenly scared of losing the barrier he had. America had asked NATO to roll down his window so he could talk to Germany. He leaned in the window a little more so that he blocked the view of the house. "Hey, you don't have to go in if you don't want to."

Germany adjusted his glasses and glanced at his house. It was still his. He owned it, everything he owned was there, all his memories, good and bad. As much as he feared it, he loved it. Besides, America doesn't know what he needs, much less where to find it. He couldn't go in there alone. Unless they video called and he could point out where things are.

No, don't be silly, Germany thought to himself. "I'll pe fine, I can handle it."

"Are you sure?"

Germany opened the door and got out, shutting the door and adjusting his coat collar. "Nein, put I can't keep hiding foreffer."

"Right," America mumbled, looking to the ground. He heard

Germany walk up to his house, his pace was quick and short as if to delay himself from reaching the porch. Even Germany was trying to confront his problems head-on, even if he was terrified.

Inside, it was deathly quiet. Germany pulled his coat closer to himself, shivering from the cold air as his breath fogged up his glasses. Of course, he expected it to be unnaturally quiet, but he didn't expect the cold air.

"Holy fuck it's cold," America broke through the silence and shivered as well. Germany nodded, daring to take a step further in. He didn't bother to take off his shoes, wanting to spend as little time in the house as possible. Even doing something like that put him on edge. He's never walked around his house with his shoes on.

"What did you need to grab?"

"Clozes, z-z-zings from mein room. Und my pooks."

"Do ya' got like a suitcase or something?"

"Ja. In zee closet zere," Germany pointed to the closet that went under the stairs.

"Of course," America dipped his head. That closet was all too familiar to him. It was the one Russia had pulled him into when they played truth or dare. That felt like a lifetime ago; when America had first started to have a crush on Russia and things weren't so complicated.

While America grabbed the suitcases, Germany went upstairs to grab what he needed. He didn't allow himself time to stop and look around and almost ran past his father's old office just to keep himself from lingering. His clothes were an easy grab, grabbing all that he needed then and setting them on his bed until America could get to his room.

"Kleider, tagebuch, tagebuch, tagebuch, (Clothes, journal, journal, journal,)" he muttered to himself as he ran to his small bookshelf in case he had left it there. His journal was important to him, holding all his good personal memories. He liked to keep that close to

himself whenever he slept, but he also liked to keep it hidden in case something ever happened and he needed to keep it safe.

He shoved his books aside, some of them falling to the floor, and patted the wall. He felt a piece of the wall dip slightly, and he applied more pressure to it. The secret compartment popped open and in the small little slot was his journal. Germany sighed and gently took his journal. It was leather-bound with an orange ribbon for a bookmark. His sister made that adjustment for him, something she had done with her own. They had matching ribbons then.

America helped Germany put his stuff away neatly in the suitcases, then put them in the back of the truck for him as he packed the next suitcase. NATO offered his help, which America declined seeing that they had it. The suitcases weren't that heavy anyway, not to him at least.

When they were almost done, with Germany packing his last bag, America wondered around his kitchen. He thought about opening the fridge but worried about the smell if anything went bad, so he decided to keep that closed. They'd have to clean out the food in the house sometime. Or maybe have someone else do it, cause America really didn't want to.

Looking out the small window in the kitchen, America got a chill down his spine again. He crossed his arms and rubbed them, hoping to warm himself up again. It was so fucking cold in the house, he thought about looking around to make sure all the windows were closed. They should have been, Germany always kept everything locked and sealed. The heat was probably turned off to save money and it was cold out, but it was colder in the house than it was outside.

America blew his warm breath onto his hands to warm them up but fogged up his sunglasses. He scoffed, taking them off and whipping them clean with his sleeve. Knowing that no one could see him and that Germany had already seen his eyes, he set his glasses down on the counter behind him and tried to warm up his hands.

"America?" Germany called from his room.

"Yeah?" America yelled.

"Could vu find mein records und pring zem up here?"

"Yeah!"

"Zank vu!"

"No problem!"

The records were in the Livingroom, America knew cause he almost broke them one time. He was about to grab his glasses and walk to the Livingroom, but something hit his hand.

"Ow, fuck!" He hissed, turning around to see what the happened. The self that held some spices had fallen, hitting his hand as it did. America looked at his hand, seeing that the nail or whatever it was had cut his finger a little, making him bleed. But when he noticed his glasses, that became a second thought.

"No, fuck no, no, no, no, no," America held the broken shades in his hand, the middle snapped in half with one of the lenses shattered.

"America, vu okay?" Germany came running into the kitchen. He noticed his spice rack half laying on the counter and half still attached to the wall with America facing it. When he turned around and held his hand over his eyes he stopped confused.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Do you have any sunglasses?" He asked, peaking through his fingers to look at him.

Germany shook his head and looked towards the counter, seeing the broken sunglasses. "Zorry, I don't haffe any," he began to pick up the small containers of spices off the ground and place them on the counter. "Do vu want me to go ask NATO?"

"Will you? He probably has some."

"I'll ko ask him. Do vu zink vu could pring dovn mein zuitcaze, it's on mein ped."

America nodded and turned his head away from Germany, letting

his hand fall to the floor. "Yeah, I'll getcha' records, too."

Thankfully NATO did have sunglass and didn't ask when Germany asked for them. Wither he knew about America's black eyes, he didn't know and didn't ask. America didn't like looking at Germany without his shades, he most likely won't talk about them.

Which means Poland can't know. Germany would have to tell him that he has an eye condition and they help him see better. That way Poland won't ask. Not that he was, almost every country is used to America always covering his eyes, probably ruling it off to something weird he does. Or a fashion choice.

Whatever it was, Germany couldn't of guess it was some sort of curse he was trying to hide. The more he did think about it, some things that had happened when he went to live with America and Britain made sense. Times when he would abruptly leave or say something that Germany didn't understand. Then he thought it was because he was busy and needed to go to a meeting quickly, and for the unknown words he thought it was because he didn't understand English too well.

America brought down Germany's bag and was waiting by the staircase for him to give him NATO's glasses. When he heard him enter, he kept his eyes down and tried to comb his hair down to cover his eyes with his fingers.

"Here," Germany handed him the sunglasses.

America frowned, seeing that they weren't the wrap-around kind he needed, but decided it would be fine. Germany would have to sit next to NATO in case he looked over. It would help him keep his eyes fully hidden.

"Is that everything you needed?"

America patted the suitcase, now actually looking at Germany. He looked up and counted with his fingers, going through a mental checklist. He stopped and looked around before running up the stairs.

"Hang on, one more zing," he said as he disappeared out of sight.

America huffed, setting his hands in his pockets to keep them warm, and looked around. He didn't know what he was looking for, just around. Whatever was eye-catching, he supposed. He could hear Germany digging around upstairs as he tried to find whatever he needed, so he looked up towards the noise for a few moments but that got boring. He noticed the creepy silver mirror that was on the wall beside him and walked over to it.

He poked his reflection, trying to see if an evil version of himself would grab him and pull him into the mirror world or whatever. He's seen that happen a lot in movies, he expects it to happen every now and then whenever he looks at a mirror. That would never actually happened, he knew, but it was fun to think about.

As he looked at his reflection he decided to fix his hair a bit, trying to make it look neat and fix it up to how he usually would. In the middle of doing that he paused. He frowned and just decided to brush it to the side, deciding that fixing his hair didn't matter. It was just going to get messier throughout the day, why would he bother anyway.

He instead stood at the mirror, frowning at his reflection. He looked at his glasses-well, NATO's-and adjusted them. They were a little thin, he noticed. Not as reflective, but that didn't matter. His thumb traced the underside of the lenses and he slowly lifted his glasses. His eyes were revealed bit by bit until he was looking at himself, eye to eye. He rubbed under his eyes, examining himself with curiosity. Curiosity he didn't know why he had but had little time to wonder as that curiosity slowly turned to hatred.

Why him? Why was this happening to him?

What did he do to deserve this? He did everything he thought was right.

If only he could just be free from this.

"America?"

America looked up at the stairs to see Germany standing at the top step. He held a small picture in his hands, gingerly holding it close to his chest. America cleared his throat and quickly pulled his sunglass down over his eyes, turning to the suitcase.

"Is that all?" He asked.

Germany nodded and began to descend the stairs. He looked at the mirror that America was looking angrily into and looked at America's reflection before he looked to his own. He didn't see himself with the rage that America had, instead he looked at it with fear. He had avoided looking at it every time he had passed it since he's been back. He expected to see someone standing behind him as he had, or at least thought he had. He was never sure, but seeing just himself brought him little comfort.

America glanced at Germany, to see if he was standing there waiting for him. Instead, he was looking into the mirror, his posture stiff and his breathing shallow as if he was trying his best to not move at all. He glanced at his own reflection before sneering and turning away.

Filled with rage, America grabbed a decretive wooden staff that was next to the coat hanger and gripped it tightly. He sharply turned to the mirror, raised the staff, and swung with all his strength.

The mirror shattered, glass shards flying everywhere. America knew to turn away, but Germany hadn't noticed what he was doing and turned away as soon as he hit the mirror. He covered his face the best he could, turning away from the mirror.

America looked up, seeing that the silver frame was hanging loosely, swaying with a few chunks of the mirror still attached. Most of it was on the ground and a few shards were on his coat but he easily shook those off. When he looked at Germany his eyes noticed the blood first.

"Oh shit, Germany, are you okay?" America dropped the staff and looked at Germany's cheek. A shard must have grazed him, a few drops dripping, but nothing worse than a scratch from a cat. Germany touched his cheek, examined the blood on his fingertips,

and nodded.

"I'm okay, put vy did vu- AHH!" He tightly held his arm, and America jumped at his cry of pain.

"What, what is it!?"

Germany hissed, tears dotting his eyes as he slowly lifted his arm. Both their eyes widened when they saw a decently sized shard of glass sticking up. It had pierced through his coat and shirt, embedding itself in his arm.

"Fuck, I'm so sorry," America held up his arm and examined his wound. "I gotta get it out."

Germany inhaled sharply when he moved it a little and tears began to pour from his eyes. He tried to hold back his cries of pain and his tears, trying to focus on America looking at his arm instead of the pain in his arm. America was trying to hold his arm still, but it didn't help that it was trembling.

"Fuck, okay, this is going to hurt," America warned as his hand hovered over the shard of glass, trying to gently grasp it.

"Nein, nein, nein, nein, nein, nein, bitte (please), nein bitte," Germany whimpered, his knees shaking.

"Germany, we can't leave this in your arm. I'll pull it out on the count of three, okay?"

Germany nodded, biting his lip and preparing for the pain at three.

"One," America gripped the shard as tightly as he could and quickly pulled it out.

Germany cried from the pain and held his arm, feeling the blood trickle out. "Vat habbened to three!"

America looked at the glass, seeing not too much of it was in his skin. Not enough for him to go to the hospital at least. "If I waited until three you would have pulled away."

"Still," Germany looked at his arm and noticed that his blood hadn't soaked through his jacket yet. He quickly began to take it off, moving carefully with his arm. He sniffed and tried to whip away his tears.

"I'm so sorry, I don't know what came over me. Let me find something for the blood." America began to try and head into the kitchen but Germany stopped him.

"Nein, let's chust leaffe. I don't vant to pe in here any longer zan I need to pe," he grabbed the photo he dropped, and America seen it was one of him and his sister. Thankfully it wasn't ruined, America would have felt worse if it was. He grabbed the suitcase for Germany and let him walk out first, following behind him slowly.

Good job, America, he thought to himself. You just had to flip out, didn't you? Maybe it would have been best if you had just stayed in your room. No one would have gotten hurt then. Just a walking disaster with no control, aren't you?

The crunch of the glass underfoot caught his attention and he glanced down. A shard of glass faced him on the ground and he saw his reflection.

Yep. No control.

He stepped on the glass and kept walking.

Just like him.

**My focus really didn't want to work with me on this chapter guys, I am so sorry it took me longer than I thought it would to write this. But I'll have the answers for the Q&A thing in the next chapter, and that shouldn't take me too long since I'm drawing it and I can draw faster than I can type. Which makes sense.**

**But anywho, it'll let you guys get any remaining questions in before I am done.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Q&A

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I reached the 20 images limit and forgot that was a thing. Sad. Anyhow, looks like imma be doing some parts to this thing then huh. Okay, next chapter I post will be an actual chapter so it's not just this ya'll are waiting for.

Happy Holidays, whatever and whenever you celebrate it cause this time of the year is full of celebrations from different cultures and even people who don't celebrate anything. I wanna include you all! So have a lovely rest of the year and I'll see you all in the next one!

Ësgöge'ae' comrades

~Galaxy

# Unseen

**Narrator's POV**

Russia was avoiding America like the plague.

He skipped the classes he had with him, avoided him in the halls, and left school earlier or later than America normally would. He had known America's schedule, something he learned out of habit, and used it to try and see him more often. Now, he used it to see him as little as possible.

He wants to forget everything that had happened, every moment of it. He wanted things to go back to how they were before, how they should have stayed; him alone.

America on the other hand was trying his best to hunt Russia down before he got to his house. He had tried to stop by there before, but his siblings would tell him that he didn't want to see him. He could tell they all felt bad about turning him away, but he knew it wasn't their fault.

His best chance was to catch him outside his house, but the country was rarely going to school and barely left his house even while they were still on speaking terms. Russia wouldn't answer his calls or texts, leaving him on read after a few hours. They needed to talk, America wanted to make things better. He couldn't just move on as he had hoped. He didn't want to forget this.

After a scolding from Poland from when he accidentally hurt Germany, he got him to sit down and talk. It took some work getting it out of him, but Poland managed to get him to spill a little. He explained that yes he was upset about everything that happened with Russia, said that his dad wouldn't get off his back, and just overall felt like trash. That was him putting it lightly, Poland knew.

Even just scratching the surface was a lot to unpack.

Poland thought it would be best to address his things with his father first, but America refused. So they settled on addressing things with Russia. Poland couldn't risk Russia's willingness to talk to him, so he couldn't directly have him visit and trap him and America in a room together, no matter how tempting that was. No, they needed Russia's trust. So, they agreed that the best thing to do was to find him and talk to him. No traps, no schemes.

Maybe a few schemes just to get a lucky break.

The lucky break America got was a few days after he got back to the European district. He skipped school that day to wait at a rarely used back road that Poland told him Russia was taking. Poland had walked with Russia back home a few times on it, and very few countries knew it was there. It snaked into the woods in his territory and was a long hike into the north where there was snow all year round. Why would anyone use it as a way to get home?

The answer was someone who was trying to avoid something.

Russia kept his hands in his jacket as he walked down the path, his breath visible in front of him. He barely felt the cold but he knew it would get worse after a bit the further up north he went. He normally hated taking this path cause it was so long and he'd rather get home faster after school, but this wasn't a normal day. He wanted to avoid both home and everyone else. The length and seclusion of the path helped him feel as if he got a break from everything.

But the cold. The cold made him worry. It has almost been a year, his skin would still be a little sensitive.

"Nyet," Russia grumbled and shook his head free of those thoughts. He can't think about that, it would hurt him. He can't afford to be hurt, not around this time of the year. He had gone so long, he wasn't going to let something as stupid as liking someone break him. He had stopped wearing bandages, his wrists had healed. He was getting better.

Was. He hated that word. 'What once was,' he thought. Was meant over with, in the past. He didn't like the word 'was' in reference to

something that should have been good.

Still, wouldn't it be nice if you could just talk to him? Make everything better?

Russia stopped in his tracks at the thought. Make everything better? How could he even do that, he hurt America. He had never heard him speak like that before. There was no going back.

What was that anyway? His accent changed, he sounded on the verge of tears and the verge of something else. Anger maybe? Russia didn't know. He had only looked back at that, noticing he had done it the day before then too when he replayed that incident over and over in his head.

Germany had looked terrified when he brought it up. He was practically ordered to go to Poland's after what had happened. Germany had been in the room when Russia was telling them what happened and when he said he spoke in a low accent, Germany practically broke his neck turning to look at them.

"He only sbeaks like zat ven he's fery angry," Germany had said. "Anger I'fe only zeen ein few times."

Russia had messed up badly for that. There was no repairing that. He shouldn't risk talking to him, he could hurt him even more.

"Russia!"

America spotted Russia down the path from where he was waiting, running down to face him. He hadn't noticed him with his head down and his hair covering his eyes, but after that yell, he did then.

Seeing him sent a knife through Russia's chest and he almost choked on air. Quickly, he began to walk away hoping he'd get the message to leave. Before anything else bad happened.

"Russia, wait, please don't leave!"

The cold air sure didn't help America warm-up as he ran down the path. He did his best to repress a shiver and focused on the Russian figure briskly walking away from him.

"Please Russia!" He called desperately.

"Amerrrica, nyet," Russia mumbled under his breath, as he pulled the flaps of his uhsanka down more over his ears to drown him out. He can't make things worse, he'll hurt him more, he can't risk hurting him. He needs to get away from him.

A hand grabbed his jacket sleeve and tugged on it hard.

"Russia, please, we need to talk!"

"Amerrrica, no!"

America froze at the word, not used to hearing the English version of that word leave his mouth. They both stood in place looking at each other. They had many moments as tense as this, but Russia was always angry looking at him. Furious, anger almost dripping out of him, out of every word he spoke. But this time it wasn't anger that coated his words and expression. It was desperation. Remorse, sorrow, anything but anger.

"No. Do you underrrstand me?"

"Russia, I do, but no to your no! I refuse to let you march out of my life like this, this is not how this is going to happen!" America pulled on his arm, trying to bring him closer.

"Zis is forrr the best."

"Whos best? Yours? Cause it certainly isn't mine!"

"Nyet, it is! Don't you get it, orrr arrre you too dumb to underrrstand?"

America frowned. Petty insult, don't let it get to you.

"Just go away." Russia tugged on his arm to try and break free but he couldn't. His grip was too tight. "You'rrre better off."

"How do you know?"

"I just do okay!"

"No, not okay! Russia, look at me!"

"Nyet! Don't you underrrstand, I kan't afforrrd to keep you arrround! You'rrre better off vith someone who von't hurt you like I do! Now stay avay!"

"Russia," America's hands trembled and his voice quivered.

"Let go of me, Amerrrica. Beforrre I make you."

"Russia, please I." America stumbled forward, his hands stretching out to reach for Russia's jacket. "I can't-"

"You have to."

"No, I can't," he grabbed onto his jacket tightly. Russia looked down at him confused but shook it off. No, he can't be affected. Show no emotion, it can be exploited.

"Russia, I can't see."

"What? See what?" Russia sneered, grabbing America's wrist to try and pull him off. Instead, America grabbed onto his hands tightly and tried to move closer again.

"You. I can't see you, I can't see anything."

"What?"

America looked up where he heard Russia and saw him just a few seconds ago. No. Not right here. He just had one. He can't have one now, not right now. Germany had to tie him up and lock him in a closet to make sure he didn't hurt anyone.

But here he's out in the open. He can't. He won't be safe, what if he hurt Russia? He can't hurt him.

"Russia, please, I can't see, I gotta get out of here, I'm not secured please."

Russia flinched back when America suddenly started coughing, black liquid splattering onto the snow. His eyes widened when he

realized what he had meant.

"I got you," Russia picked him up and started running. He knew he was too far from home, even if he ran off the path. It would cut down on travel time by a significant amount, but that wouldn't make a difference. Still, better than nothing.

Russia darted off the path and into the trees, being forced to slow down slightly from the snow. He knew the direction to go, it was basically straight down since he wasn't too far along the path. As he moved as fast as he could, he once again wished for a vehicle of some kind, even a sled if it helped. America needed to be restrained fast, so maybe tying him to the sled could help.

He heard New Zealand and Canada talk about what he needed to do in case America had an episode. They knew he knew about America, and wanted to make sure he was as equipped as they were in case something happened. He had been there with Australia when he was thrashing and screaming in his restraints at his own home. He couldn't stand it then, and he couldn't stand it now, but he knew what he needed to do.

"Russia, please, I can't hold it in."

"It's okay, I got you," Russia tried to console America as he huffed, jumping over snow mounds and ducking under trees. He felt America convulse in his arms and he almost tripped and dropped him. He felt the liquid he was coughing up spray onto his neck and cheek but tried not to focus on that, as gross as it was.

He was too far away, there would be no way he could make it home. The snow was slowing him down, he couldn't run as fast as he wanted to. If only he could find the road. Or something. There has to be something close by.

I can't believe I'm doing this.

Russia made a sharp turn and started running in a different direction. He was distracted by his determination to get America to safety he almost didn't realize he had turned. When it hit him, his urge to run in the direction he was originally in was quickly

suppressed. No, there's something over there he had to get to. It was safe, secluded, and abandoned. No one has been there for almost a centenary, it would be perfect.

"Perrrfect," Russia muttered, looking down at America. He was quivering, black liquid streaking down from his mouth, soaking into both their jackets. His hands curled around each other, holding them close to his body. He was cold, shaking from that and the effort it took for him to keep calm. His outbursts were rooted in panic after all. At least that was Russia's theory.

"It's okay, ve'rrre almost therrre."

"Please, please don't leave me, I can't," America was interrupted by his own coughing, turning away to throw up some more. Thankfully not on Russia this time.

"I'm herrre, I'm herrre, everrrything is fine, I'm herrre," Russia held him closer. He held him in one arm long enough to take off his hat and place it on America's head. He panicked about something unseen touching him before Russia calmed him down. "It's okay, it's my ushanka, it's okay."

The path.

Russia skidded to a stop, almost slipping on something smooth under the snow. He looked around, looking for a path, and noticed a stone structure. It was buried under snow with frozen vines wrapped around it. He didn't have time to wonder what it was. There was no time.

In his frantic searching, he saw something else. In the distance, down the apparent covered path, there was something. Russia chased after it, hoping it was a house of some kind. Anything that could be useful. The building was surrounded by trees, and the winter's snow, masking its full expanse. The closer Russia got to it, the more he realized how massive the structure was.

His running slowed when he got closer to it, absentmindedly gasping.

It looked to have been built in the middle of what once a field, based on how smaller the trees around the house were. If one could even call it that. It looked more like a castle, almost as big as England's in fact. Except, time has defiantly gotten ahold of this building. The paint, what looked to have been a bright color of some sort was now tinted, stained with wear and tear and vines that had climbed onto its walls. A tree that had fallen was embedded into the side of the building, part of the rooftop was broken and on the ground hidden under mounds of snow. Tall statues on the roof had fallen over, leaving their pedestals in their place with a few left in a recognizable condition. A few windows were broken, from what looked to be natural causes instead of vandalism. From Russia's guess anyway.

He had never seen this place before. It felt familiar to him, the building and structure alone giving a sense of familiarity.

But what was this place?

It was shelter, Russia told himself as he ran to one of the massive gates.

Russia ran towards the frozen gate and braced his shoulder for impact. He rammed himself into it, holding America out of the way. The metal bars creaked and bent back, breaking from the icy hold that stuck them to the ground. Russia hit the gate again, a foot or so gained with the loud screeching of the metal. With a third hit part of the gate broke, the metal bars falling to the ground and hitting the surface under the snow with a bang. It sounded like stone.

America convulsed again, choking on the liquid that gathered in his throat. He was dropped from Russia's arms, landing in the snow. The sudden change scared him and he couldn't feel Russia anymore. Where had he gone? He said he wouldn't leave, where did he go, he can't be gone.

"Hë'ëh, hë'ëh, hë'ëh, Russia! (No, no, no, Russia!)" America called running his hand through the snow.

"He's not here," a disembodied voice laughed. "It's like I said. There is no one else but me."

"Hë'ëh. hë'ëh, Ëshanitgë't! (No, no, leave me alone!)"

A hand grabbed his arm and he tore himself away.

"Hë'ëh! Si:gwa:h! (No! Go away!)"

The snow hurt but he couldn't feel anything but the snow. Where was he? It was like he was trapped in that blizzard. All around him was just white, miles and miles of it. The roaring of the wind, the stabbing of the snow as it hit his open skin. No, he was wearing a coat, shoes, it can't hurt him. Why was it all he can see?

Where did this blizzard come from?

No, there was no blizzard, this can't be real. He was just with Russia. Right? Wasn't he just with him? Where did he go?

All he could see was white, the flurry of a non-existent storm. He couldn't hear Russia telling him he was safe over the winds only he heard. As much as he tried to convince himself what he was seeing and feeling wasn't real, it didn't amount to much. Everything was so vivid, how could it not be real? Was he willing to risk the chance that he wasn't stuck in a snowstorm? What if he was and he died?

He couldn't leave off like this. Not after everything he had gained, he couldn't just lose that.

But he wasn't in a storm. Russia knew that, but every time he tried to grab America he would flinch away and would scream and hit him. Getting desperate, Russia took off his coat and opened it out, ready to use it like a net. It would have to work, he didn't want to hurt him, but they needed to get somewhere where he could be properly restrained.

He scooped up America, quickly wrapping him in the coat. He screamed and struggled, flailing around, and even tried to bite Russia's hand. He was strong, stronger than Russia had initially thought, but he was still restrained long enough for him to be picked up and held close. With a final kick, the gate opened up enough for Russia to get through with America.

He ran through the archway coming into an enclosed area, a

courtyard Russia guessed. A few trees stripped of their leaves and color stood, swaying and creaking from the slight breeze. He didn't allow himself anytime to stop and stare, instead, he ran through what looked like the remnants of a garden, scanning the enclosed building sides to see someway inside.

"Age'ne:gëh, ëkeya'dagehë:ök! (Please, they need my help!)" America yelled, wiggling in Russia's arms. "Age'ne:gëh, satö:de' nigai'sdowanëh? Ëgatgënihsa'ha'! (Please, can't you hear how loud it is? I have to get to them!)"

Not understanding him, Russia was left no choice but to ignore him and keep moving. The closer he got to the other end of the courtyard the closer he would be to a way inside. He didn't know how he was so sure, but he had little things to go on beyond his instincts, so he decided to put his faith in them.

It was a smart choice in this instance. He noticed what looked like a slight incline, like a ramp that leads to a door. Russia ran to it as best as he could with America constantly trying to get out of his arms. With a swift kick, the door flung open with a thunderous slam as it hit the wall. He ran inside, trailing in snow and slipping on the smooth tile floor. Russia tried to steady himself and regain his balance, but he wasn't as fast as he needed to be and hit the ground with a loud thud. The back of his head stung and throbbed in time with his racing heartbeat.

"Blyat, (fuck)" He groaned, trying to come to his senses.

The running footsteps brought him back quickly.

America had stood up and had started running down the entrance hall. He had stopped screaming, turning to mumbles under his breath as he raced down the hall. Russia's jacket was wrapped around his shoulders and he held it closer to him in an effort to keep out the cold. The blizzard in his vision had disappeared as soon as he was through the entrance to the palace, allowing him to see where he was.

True in placement, but wrong in time.

"Amerrrica!" Russia stumbled to his feet, running on the red carpet as to not slip again. The hall was big, once grand and stunning without a doubt, but was reduced to a poorly cared for snapshot of history. That's all he cared to notice, instead keeping his focus on America. He was gaining on him, having an advantage with longer strides.

America lead him to a grand staircase, one that broke off into two, heading opposite of the other. As Russia ran up the steps, practically on the other's heels, he saw that the staircases mirrored each other, turning in a raised L that connected on the second floor. The long walls had once been painted white, accented with gold designs and decorated with marble statues. The huge windows that lined the walls were enough to light the whole staircase, but there were light fixtures that showed that the place was made, or at least had been lived in, during the age of electricity.

The sound of their heavy footsteps echoed and radiated off the walls, bouncing into every nearby room. There had been little sound inside the palace, so any nearby critters or others that had chosen to use the palace as a shelter were immediately alerted to their rapid approach.

At the top step, Russia grasped how big the whole room was, looking up at the raised ceiling to see a painted mural at the top. It was lined in gold, statues carved to appear to be holding it in place. Compared to the outside, these sculptures appeared to have no damage. Evidence of animals nesting in little crooks, but other than that almost perfectly preserved.

Realizing he had been momentarily caught off guard by the interior design, he turned around to follow America again. He had run straight into the next room, a much smaller one compared to the staircase that had some sort of round gazebo in the center, with pillars of green stone. America had jumped up onto the platform and ran right through it right into the next room, Russia following suit.

Russia slipped again on the smooth floor, this time catching himself with his hand and jumping back up as fast as he had fallen. His wrist stung from his full weight being forced upon it so suddenly.

The moment lost was enough for America to make it to the end of what appeared to be some form of a long ballroom. How was he not slipping, Russia thought, and resumed the chase.

America slowed to a stop, much to the delight of an exhausted Russia. He tried to quiet his breath and keep his steps light to not startle America. The last thing he wanted was for him to run off and maybe even get them both lost in this place.

This place, Russia thought as he looked around the room. What was this place anyway?

The room was lined with windows, most intact but a few broken, one had its entire frame and half of the wall fallen onto the floor. A chandelier hung from the center of the ceiling, swaying and creaking from the slight breeze that got inside the room. The cold finally made itself known and Russia shivered, holding his arms close together.

"Satö:de' neh yödënodahgwa'? (Can you hear the music?)" America asked, his eyes trained on the thin platform in front of him.

"What?" Russia asked out of instinct. He sharply inhaled and held his breath, waiting for America to start running away from him again.

Instead, America turned his head, swaying slightly to a concert Russia could not hear. When Russia saw his full face he noticed his sunglasses were off. He didn't see him take them off, so he assumed he had dropped them sometime during their struggle to get inside the palace. The black that surrounded his greyed irises had completely engulfed them, leaving two empty pools of night. What appeared to be tears rolled down his cheeks, but the liquid was dark, almost as black as his eyes.

He expected him to run when he looked at him. But America saw right through Russia, seeing instead ghostly figures dancing in the sunlight. Gowns and suits, decorated in shimmering fabrics lined with gold and shimmering gems were worn on ghostly images of past countries, those versions lost so long ago in the past.

"маленький кролик! (little rabbit)" A voice in his head called out to him.

America turned and in the doorway, he saw the shoulder of a country just as they went behind the door frame. He laughed and called out after the figure, taunting it playfully as they did a routine America had once been used to. That was a lifetime ago.

Russia followed America as he jogged over to a doorframe that had its door missing. He peeked around the corner and laughed, confusing Russia. He hadn't seen anyone, nor had he heard anything other than their footsteps and America's words he would never understand. But seeing how he didn't look like he was going to run away anytime soon, Russia decided to follow him and make sure he didn't get hurt.

They passed through multiple rooms, each one in various stages of decay. It was eerie, being in this huge place with how it looked and how America was acting. Those feelings were mixed with a sense of longing, displacement almost. The mix left him confused. How could he have never been here and somehow feel as if he was home?

A few rooms did stand out to Russia, which was a feat considering that each room stood out in its own way. A circular room that held an obelisk-shaped pillar in the center of the room. It was marked and chipped with what looked like a sharp object, perhaps a sword. America had stood behind the obelisk, peeking behind the corner and giggling to himself before running into another room. He knew this place somehow, Russia had begun to realize. A late realization, albeit.

Another was a long corridor that was darkened from a lack of light. There were ripped tapestries, threads clinging to the posts they were hanging from, with some laying on the floor or missing entirely. This hallway was entirely unsettling, but America skipped right through it, holding his hands behind his back.

The other was the room at the end of the corridor, and it was cause of the simple fact that the wall had caved in, along with part of the ceiling. The snow had built up in the room and their breaths were

visible, appearing as puffs of white smoke. America shivered and pulled Russia's coat around him. In his eyes, the coat he thought he was wearing somehow appeared over his shoulders, so he put it on to combat the cold. He would have to talk to someone about the heat in his wing.

America lead Russia into another room, the colors of the walls changing to a faint blue stained with time and dirt. Blue curtains covered the windows, spotted with holes in the fabric closest to the ground. Seeing that Russia worried about the possibility of critters and insects damaging the sturdiness of the floor. He didn't want to fall the height of these rooms, especially with other debris falling with him. They could get seriously hurt, and no one was close by. Hell, he didn't even know where he was. He had run off the path, something he should not have done and was so stupid to do in hindsight.

Without him, America carried on chasing his specter. He could hear the deep voice taunting him with a low earthy chuckle. It humored America and brought a childish smile to his face. He held back his own taunts and instead tried to find a way to hide from the ghostly image that his own mind blurred the face of. He wouldn't let him beat him.

It was when they got to the blue bedroom America knew he had won.

Russia gawked at the sight of the massive room with an accompanied bed that had ripped fabrics that surrounded it. Two massive marble pillars framed the bed, grabbing the attention the most. Everything had been painted or decorated with blue. The walls, the sheets, the furniture. Any other color was white and everything had been accented with gold. How could someone leave a place like this? Leave everything here as well, leaving it all to be damaged by the elements. Thieves were not a thing to worry about, not with the number of expensive pieces still left in each room and the halls.

America laughed and danced around the room, jumping onto the bed and rolling around the in the sheets. Black liquid streaked from his eyes still but when they lost touch of America, it was like they

disappeared. Or lost their black color and the contrast gave the illusion that the teardrops disappeared.

"Amerrrica?" Russia asked walking up to the side of the bed. He had gotten him to talk to him once before, even when he was like this. Maybe he can do it again. "Do you know zis place?"

His voice was muted to America. Something that Russia confirmed by asking a few more questions that went unacknowledged.

But something was wrong.

America sat up and looked at the window. Through his moment of time, the curtains had been drawn back to allow for the sunlight to light up the room. In reality, they were torn and one was completely missing.

"Hë'ëh, (No,)" America gasped. He tore the blanket he had wrapped himself in off and scrambled off the bed. Russia jumped back and called after America as he ran out of the room. He was sprinting out of the blue-painted part of the palace, back into the caved in room and down the tapestry corridor. Russia watched his footing to not slip again and was chasing after America. Just when he thought he wasn't going to run away, he got up and took the chance. Of course.

The rooms he had stopped to admire now went by in a blur as he followed America. He was trying to keep the mental map he had of each room to tell where they had been so they didn't get lost, but the further along they ran he realized that wasn't necessary. America was running back where they had started.

Through the circle room, the dining room, the green room, both empty assumed ballrooms, the room with the gazebo structure, and back to the giant staircases.

America grabbed the rail, grabbed the sides, and swung himself over it. Russia panicked, screaming his name as he looked over the railing. America had landed on the steps below and didn't look fazed at all. He was right back to running as soon as he had made contact with the floor below him. Russia didn't risk it and ran down the rest of the steps, skipping a few to save time.

A thousand thoughts raced through America's head. He had to make it in time. He had to stop it. He knew it was coming, he could do something. He needed his chance to say goodbye.

He ran, running for so long his legs ached but that didn't matter to him. It didn't matter to either of them, even though they both shared the same ache. They both chased after something, running out the way they came and into the snow. Russia did spot America's sunglasses on the floor where he had first slipped but didn't bother to pick those up.

He had just made it outside when he saw America standing at the edge of what Russia had assumed was the garden. He watched him collapse into the snow, lifting his head to the sky and letting out the loudest and angriest scream he has ever heard come from him. Russia ran to him, thinking that he had gotten hurt somehow, but as soon as he got close he was knocked to the ground. America had jumped up and tackled Russia.

"Hë'ëh! Dë'ëh go:wah nö'sye:'!? Do: niswawje:ëh?! (No! Why did you do it!? How could you?!)" He screamed at Russia, grabbing his shirt collar and slamming him down onto the ground. Russia yelled and hissed from pain. The heat from where he was hit battled against the cold of the snow that he had no protection from.

"Amerrrica, get off me!" Russia screamed, grabbing ahold of his shoulders and trying to lift him up. America screamed at him incoherently, keeping his tight hold on his shirt. He raised him up and lifted his fist, ready to throw a punch. Out of instinct, Russia leaped to his feet, throwing America off of him, quickly trying to pin him to the ground.

"Amerrrica! Stop it! Do you hear me! It's me! It's me Rrrussia!"

"Sagögwe'da:tgë'! Do: niswawje:ëh?! (You monster! How could you?!)" America screamed, kicking Russia in the chest and launching him off of him. Russia stumbled back and America scrambled to his feet, raising his fist ready to fight. His eyes were narrowed, the black tears streaming down faster and his mouth was turned into a snarl, one that seemed to deepen with every breath he took.

"Amerrrica, please, I don't vant to hurrrt you. You'rrre seeing things rrremember?" Russia pleaded, hoping that somehow he could snap him out of it. "This isn't rrreal, I'm rrreal! Listen to me!"

"Sënowë:h! (You lier!)"

America lunged and Russia blocked his attack. With the swiftness America hadn't shown before, he threw another punch, turning to kicks. Russia blocked them all, moving faster than he had first thought he would have to. He blocked a kick and grabbed America's ankle, holding him in place. America jumped, kicked Russia's jaw, and flipped, landing on his feet. Russia had stumbled back, holding his jaw in pain. He felt blood in his mouth, tasting the familiar iron flavor.

"I don't vant to hit you, but I'm getting close to doing it," Russia warned. He looked at his dropped hat that had been on America's head and got an idea. He didn't think it would work, but he was ready to take a chance.

When America lunged for another attack, Russia ducked and extended his leg, hooking America's ankles with his leg and causing him to fall. With a brief thanks to ballet lessons as a kid, Russia grabbed his hat. America had enough time to turn around before his face was engulfed by fur. Using the Ushanka as a way to blind him, Russia grabbed his coat's belt, spinning America around to make him lose his sense of direction and balance. He had meant to just grab the strap that went around his jacket's waist but had pulled off the whole coat. Going with it, Russia wasted no time in tying America's wrists together.

"Ëgahdë:di'! (Let me go!)" America shouted, along with other shouts of words that were defiantly not kid-friendly. he managed to shake the ushanka off his face so he could see what was happening, not that it did him any good. Russia held America's legs in the air, keeping them locked together with one arm while he tried to untie his boot's laces. When America started squirming, he set his foot on his chest to hold him in place.

"I said I didn't vant to hurrrt you," Russia said, wrapping America's bootlaces around his ankles and tying them together. With America

now properly restrained, Russia let him go. He wiggled around like a worm, struggling to free himself from his restraints. With the time to do it now, Russia brushed off the snow that was on his skin and in his hair. He grabbed his hat and jacket, putting them on and trying to calm down for a second.

When America started to try and use his teeth to free his hands, Russia picked him up and slung him over his shoulders. They had a long walk ahead of them, and hopefully, by then America would have calmed down. The most he could do to fight against Russia was kick and flail, hitting his back the hardest he could. Thankfully his coat provided some cushioning.

Following his previous footsteps, Russia was confident he would be able to make it back to the path he was originally walking. When they left the palace grounds, America had gradually stopped trying to get free and was limply slumped over. He was still breathing, Russia could hear it, but he couldn't tell if he was still crying the black tears or had the black liquid coming from his mouth. There was no way he would risk checking in case this was some sort of ploy to get free.

Snow started to fall, at first, it was just little puffs of powder but after a few minutes, it started to come down heavier. Russia would be okay in the cold for a while, but America? It was always either one or the other with him, and he rather not risk it.

Russia pulled out his phone, leaning against a tree for a moment to take a break. His screen was cracked but he expected that. He actually expected more, but it didn't matter. He could still use it and he had a good enough signal to call.

"Hello?" Canada answered his call, confused as to why Russia was trying to get ahold of him. "Is everything okay?"

"It's yourrr brrrother."

It didn't take long for Canada to drive to where they were. Russia had given him the gist of what happened; America tried to talk to him, had an episode, and tried to attack him. He did his best to explain the black tears, the strange way he was acting without

giving away where they had been. A deep feeling inside him told him not to. No one can know that's where it was. It wasn't safe.

The thing was, it was unsafe. But for who was the unanswered question.

Canada had driven down the path for ten minutes or so before spotting Russia carrying his brother. He stopped his truck and jumped out, running over to the two. He noticed some dried blood on Russia's cheek and a bruise under his chin. Must have been from America, he figured. To add to that, Russia looked exhausted. His legs were shaking, his back arched under the weight of America.

"Let me help you," Canada offered to take his brother but Russia refused.

"I have him," he insisted, forcing his legs to make it to the short distance to the truck.

"Than let me get the door."

Canada held open the door to the back seat, expecting Russia to lay America down on the seat. Instead, he got in the back seat with him, cradling him in his arms. He looked to have passed out, for how long neither knew. It didn't matter. America groaned, shifting in Russia's arms, his eyes twitching. The sudden change in movement had disturbed him and he had begun to wake up.

"Amerrrica?" Russia asked, brushing the strands of colored hair out of his face.

He coughed, turning over to his side as the coughing turned into a hacking. Canada jumped, grabbing out a bag from under the seat, and gave it to Russia. "Hold it under him in case he throws up," he said before quickly getting behind the wheel and turning around. The path was covered in ice and snow, but Canada had driven through worse with out of season tires. This was a piece of cake.

But, he could have given a warning.

Russia hit his head on the seat in front of him a few times, each time Canada apologizing, and by the time they had turned into

Britain's driveway, Russia was sure he would have a headache for the rest of the day.

Canada helped Russia out of the truck and to the front door. There France opened the door and brought the three inside, sending Canada to go fetch his brothers. Russia looked around the house, trying to spot something to set America on so he could lay comfortably.

"What 'appened, 'on, you're bluhdeng," France stood on her tip-toes, examining his chin and the dried blood on his cheek.

"I'm fine," Russia tried to say but France held his and used her shirt sleeve to try and clean his face. When she was done looking at him, she examined America. He had what appeared to be a brush burn on the side of his cheek, but nothing serious.

The two looked up at the staircase when they heard rapid approaching footsteps. The rest of the household lead by Canada came into view, running down the steps. Australia took America from Russia's arms, Britain taking that time to examine his son as France had. They all spoke over each other, mostly asking questions but Russia didn't have time to process one before another was asked.

Canada tried to explain what Russia told him the best he could as he untied America's wrists and ankles. Russia leaned against the wall, nodding along to what he was saying, too exhausted to do anything else.

"Take him upstairs," Britain said to his sons before turning to Russia. He held in his hand the coat belt that was tied around America's wrist, easily matching it up with its owner. "Outside," he ordered, walking to the front door.

Russia looked at the base of the stairs where Australia was carrying America. He held his eyes shut, his body limp, no doubt in a fugue-like state with no proper grasp on his surroundings. At least he would be safe, now. He was home. They knew what to do better than Russia did.

Outside Britain handed him his jacket belt, keeping his gaze off of the Russian. Russia preferred it that way if he was honest. He knew he didn't like him and the feeling was mutual.

"Not a word of this to anyone."

Britain turned, looking up at Russia. His maroon eyes pierced through Russia's, threatening him to even object to what he said. His hands gripped his cane tightly, lifting it and jabbing him in his chest with the golden ball at the top.

"You will regret it," he warned, trying to keep his composure just enough to not yell at the other. "Understood?"

Russia moved the cane off of him, glaring down at Britain. "Underrrstood."

"Good," he backed off of him, lowering his cane and adjusting his collar and vest. Without another word, he sharply turned back inside and slammed the door behind him. Russia rubbed his chin, glaring at the door for a second before walking down the stairs.

Stuck up old man, Russia scornfully thought to himself, shoving his hands into his jacket pockets. Should have snapped that cane in half for what he did.

That anger quickly left him when he glanced back to the house. He knew where America's room was, and although he couldn't see it from his angle he could perfectly picture it in his head. He could imagine him laying on his bed, someone staying with him just in case he woke up or began to choke on the black liquid.

Now that he had time to process everything that had happened, he realized he had dropped everything once America had needed him. It was almost instantaneously. There was no way for him to just forget everything that has happened, especially after a day like this. There was no going back, not when he still cared for that dummy.

Maybe they should sit down and talk. Russia was never the best with words, if they did that he would mess it up again.

No, he needed to do something else. Something that he could do for

him that would prove that he still likes him, that he still cares deeply about him. Something that didn't need words to explain it. A gift could always be given platonically, anything like that Russia wouldn't even know where to start anyway.

Russia stood on the bridge that connected the British Isles with the mainland. From there he could see the woods that spread across the land. Perhaps, he thought to himself as he examined the wintered forest. Perhaps he can fix things by bringing him answers.

He narrowed his eyes, nodding to himself, and began to hurry home. He knew what he needed to do then, and had to prepare. Instead of going back there with no direction, he knew he needed to make a plan. This time he wouldn't just give up when he doesn't find anything.

Russia ran down the sidewalk that went along the forest with a drive that he thought had completely left him. Things would be fixed soon, he told himself. He was confident. His expression, the furrowed eyebrows, and a slight smile could tell anyone that.

It was a difference, a noticeable difference with how he was recently. Not a lot of countries were on the street to see, but one curious little figure did. Hidden away in the woods Russia ran past, crouched someone who had been looking for him. With how rarely he went outside, he was a difficult country to find.

Not wanting to lose this chance, the figure silently crept along and followed behind Russia.

**First chapter of the new year! Whoooo! Let's see if I can actually improve my updating schedule or do it like once and then back to the two or three-week thing. I'm hopeful, but also realistic. Is that even supposed to be possible?**

**Oh well. I do know part of the reason it takes me so long to write is cause of translations and accents, but I know you all like those and have fun with it so it's up to ya'll if you think I should keep them.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# A/N

Hey guys might have to take a bit of a break. I know I know, I just said I would try to update more too. Life loves tryna undermine me huh.

Anyways. There's been sort of a death in the family and how it happened and everything I saw has left me with some amazing ✧ trauma ✧ so I have that to look forward to. But that's not the point. Point is, I will either be off for awhile and take a little bit to upload or imma throw myself into my writing and art and update more frequently until I burn out. Kids, don't do that last one. Not a healthy coping thing to do, it's really bad.

Take care of yourself. Be smart.

I on the other hand have been known to be very dumb so we'll see.

But that's all for now.

Jigwas, ësgöge'ae' comrades!

~Galaxy

# Unlikely Friend

**Expositional chapter warning!**

**Narrator's POV**

It was an oddly warm day for being winter. Of course, climate change but on the island climate was regulated to match with each countries proper season. UN must have done something, on accident or on purpose who knew. It didn't matter, the melting snow allowed Russia to work outside for a bit.

The snow was heavier and took on a composition similar to that of a snow cone, so not the best to shovel. Russia could work with it though. He'd rather this than trying to do it in a blizzard. Scraping ice off the stone path, putting salt to battle against it forming again, and making sure his father's headstone was cleaned off and had no sign of weathering.

He wanted to get a few household chores done before he left.

Russia didn't know how long he would be gone, at most a week. But he was willing to go longer if he needed to. Whatever to get America some answers. He wouldn't run away or be scared, as America had been. At that moment, he was the best person to do this. From his knowledge at least. He even had a few allies in the caves; the nameless kids. If he could find those kids again, maybe he could have a better chance.

A chance he would have.

From the wood line the small figure, that had been more or less stalking Russia all the way to his home, was hiding behind a tree. He wore dull colored clothes and one of his bear skinned cloaks to hide and keep himself warm.

He was keenly watching Russia as he worked, finding interest in the strange statue in the back yard. He would have walked up to it to

look at it more closely, but his footprints in the snow would have given him away easily. So repress his impulsiveness to be curious he did.

At least there he did. If he had been able to do that before he left his village's hiding place he wouldn't have been in this situation. But he couldn't help himself, he was fascinated by the country. He had heard many stories of his elders, the strong country that helped the people up north, the deal that his mother had made with the Empire, tales of times where both sides helped each other. He wanted to see if Russia shared some of the same qualities as he was told his ancestors had.

He was the great wolf, of course. But then again, that's something only his siblings call him.

Seeing that Russia had moved a little and the small boy couldn't see him he decided to get a little closer. He ducked down, holding his little cloak up off the ground, and started humming to himself. It was a little theme song, one that mimicked a character in a movie he did not see at all, cause if he did his mother would be very upset. But if he did, which he totally didn't, that character's name might hypothetically have been named Kronk.

As he hummed his little theme song, he skillfully and silently ducked behind leafless bushes and quickly hid behind trees. His moccasins provided him the ability to move quieter and lighter, the color of the bear fur was perfect to hide behind the dark trees. He was agile, light, and well-coordinated.

At least for a little while.

As soon as he was about to move behind another tree, his foot got caught on a root and he tripped and fell smack on his face.

Quickly he scattered back behind the tree he just tried to move from and held his breath.

There was no sound and when the little boy took a chance to peek behind the tree he was relieved to see Russia had not been outside to see him fall. He must have gone inside.

"Phew," he whispered to himself. He ducked behind the tree he was heading for and moved a little closer, less careful now that Russia wasn't in the backyard anymore. He would have gotten closer and maybe actually approach him instead of hiding but he was always around America. He was just coming from his house, so maybe they are done seeing each other for the day. Still, the risk was too great. His mother always said that the most important thing was that he must never see their faces again. Not until they can make it safer, at least. He couldn't wait until then. He really missed hanging out with his older brother.

Everyone missed how it used to be, he knew he wasn't alone in that. But still, they all were hesitant to even do anything more than what had already been done. It was not the right time, or it's too risky were common explanations. This entire thing was a huge risk, and he was doing it okay, so surely they all can do it, too.

The small tribe sat down on a raised tree root to stop and think for a moment. His brothers were taking a huge risk for him to even be here. They could all get into serious trouble. No one's done this before, not from what they could find out at least. They were all too scared, even if they didn't admit it.

Being a young tribe makes it hard to learn things. Everyone else thinks they are too young to know or aren't ready for it. They are only at least a thousand years old, they aren't that young.

"Why can't we be told what's going on. I just want to help," the boy frowned and crossed his arms. For being young, they were powerful. He knew that they could do something. Their mom was a child of a unification, that has to account for something right?

He looked behind the tree he was sitting at to see if he could spot Russia through a window or in the back yard again. As he looked he mumbled, "if I can just talk to The Wolf again, maybe he can help. Then they'll know that we aren't some dumb kids."

There was no sign of the big country, so he turned back around. Then he saw squatting next to him was Russia.

"Hey," he waved.

"AHHHHH!"

The smaller boy stumbled back, tripping on his cloak, and fell on his back.

"Shit! I'm sorrry, arrre you okay?" Russia jumped up to try and help him but quickly realized his looming figure would scare him more than anything. He kneeled down, hovering his knee over the snow, and offered a hand for the small one to take. "Let me help you up."

With a face burning from embarrassment, the young tribe took his hand and accepted the help to stand up. He adjusted his clothes and headdress, looking down and keeping his lips shut.

Russia couldn't believe it when he spotted the boy. He also didn't mean to scare him, but when he heard something in the woods and recognized the feathered hat he couldn't believe his luck. Now with a closer look at the boy, he recognized him as the one he called 'one feather'. He had red skin, some shades brighter than his own and a more intricate flag design compared to the common series of stripes. There appeared to even be text, which wasn't a common sight.

"What arrre you doing herrre?" He asked.

One Feather looked up and averted his eyes. "I. I, um. I thought you were cool. We haven't met anyone new in a long time."

Russia waited for a second to make sure he didn't speak over the boy and asked further, "how did you even find me?"

"Oh. I saw you at Hanödaga:nyas home. I wasn't supposed to be there, my mom says it's dangerous. But I wasn't scared! I'm a warrior, and I never get scared!"

One Feather took out a small stone blade and jabbed at the air with it to demonstrate his claim. Russia chuckled, leaning away from his stabbing. The small dagger looked incredibly sharp.

"Ha, han-oo-daga? Do you mean Amerrrica?"

One Feather nodded, putting his small knife in its proper holster.

"What does zat vorrrd mean?"

"Oh, it means 'town destroyer'. That's what my mom and grandpas' called him."

"Why is he kalled zat?"

One Feather went quiet. His small hands played with the leather lace that tied his cloak together, twirling it in his fingers. A bad question to have asked, Russia realized. He figured to take the self-explanatory explanation for now.

"What's yourrr name?"

With some hesitation, the little boy answered, "Seneca."

"Do you rrremember mine?"

"Ëh, Russia."

Assuming what he said was yes, Russia nodded and smiled. He looked over at the stone bench and thought about asking if they should sit there, but Seneca jumped into his own questions before he could.

"What does Russia mean? Does it mean wolf!? Or bear!? Or warrior!?"

"Uh, what?"

"Your name. My name means 'people of the great hill', what does Russia mean in your language?"

Seneca beamed up at him with a wide smile, happily waiting for his reply. Russia rubbed his neck and gave a nervous chuckle.

"I actually don't know. I never asked."

"Oh. What do you think it means?"

"Vell, I zink maybe it has to do vith the Vikings and the Kievan-Rrrus."

"Vikings? I heard stories about them. They tried to conquer the northern tribes but they didn't stand a chance! We're stronger!" Seneca held up his arms, showing them off as if he had muscles. He even tried to puff out his chest to act bigger and stronger. He was pretty strong for his figure, much like his brothers, a fact that wasn't obvious by looking at the boys.

"I kan see," Russia tried his best not to laugh. "Did you vant to sit down somewherrre? Zat vay ve kan talk better?"

Seneca looked over at the house, seeing how big and odd it looked. The windows looked to have been covered but curtains can be easily drawn back. He can't let anyone know he was here. He could get into so much trouble.

"I don't know. I can't be seen."

"Nyet one's home, I prrromise you nyet one vill see you."

The small boy shuffled his feet towards the tree, the snow underfoot crunching as he moved. "Okay. My feet are cold."

Russia lead him to the back porch and there they sat down on the steps. He offered him a drink of something, something to snack on maybe, too. Seneca politely declined and took out a small container of water and a small wrapped sandwich out of his leather satchel. He in turn offered some of his food and drink, and Russia felt rude to say no to a kid.

"Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?" Russia asked as he ate a bit of the sandwich. He realized it was the same one he had offered before when they managed to escape the caves.

"No, I don't mind. Can I ask you some questions? I have to be the first one to know if the stories are true."

"Of courrrse."

"Okay, you first. You said it before me," Seneca kicked his feet back and forth, his heels hitting the wood in a rhythmic pattern.

"What happened to the village? I vent to it awhile ago and it vas

gone."

"Oh, it wasn't safe anymore. Countries found us, so we had to move to another spot. We were going to move again in a few years anyway. We usually move every 20 years so," Seneca finished his part of his sandwich and licked the small breadcrumbs off his fingers.

"Hmm. What verrre the kaves ve verrre in?"

"Oh, that's the tunnels. They're everywhere, all underground. They even go under the waters! We use them as a way to hide and travel while leaving everyone above ground alone. My mom says we are part of the past, and it's best if we stay out of the way. We don't want to end up like the others."

"Otherrrs?"

"The forgotten ones. They've passed on now, but we have places in the caves where we honor them. I never met most of them, but I hear many stories."

Russia blinked, not knowing how to continue from that. He couldn't imagine being brought to such a grim topic with a young child. Though he looked to be mature enough to handle it, looking as if he were 12 or 13, but it was the manner in which he spoke. He sounded well adapt to the conversation as if it were a normal and everyday thing. That in itself was worrying.

"Um. Vas," Russia tried to think of something more lighthearted for a kid to talk about. "Vas it veirrrd seeing us drrressed in kostumes?"

"No, I like Halloween!" Seneca bounced, happy to talk about the holiday. "Me and my brothers love it, but my mom says it's not part of tradition so we can't celebrate it."

He then looked around him, trying to make sure he and Russia were alone. Leaning in closer he whispered, "some of the older tribes help make our costumes and we go trick or treating whenever mom is busy. But it's a secret so don't tell anyone."

Russia did the motion of locking his lips and he nodded, taking a

small oath of silence. He then thought of his most important question.

"What did you vant with Amerrrica?"

Seneca looked down and remained silent. He brought his knees up to his chest and played with the leather string on his moccasins.

He had hit a cord, Russia realized. There was a pattern here. America's desperate attempts, and somehow well-delivered ability to forget, and the reluctantness of Seneca to tell him anything to do with the country. They both went quiet, avoided eye contact, and fiddle nervously.

As unnerving as it was, it intrigued Russia.

Before he could question further, Seneca asked, "who's that?"

Russia looked to where he was looking and saw the stone sculpture of his father. His hand subconsciously moved to his pocket where he kept the journal. He answered, "Zat's my dad."

"Is he gone?"

"Da," Russia nodded.

"I'm sorry. What was he like? I never had a dad."

"He vas strrrong. Strrrongest country I knew," Russia tried to think of small things to share. Something a little boy might find interesting at least. "He vas a great fighter, taught me everrrything I know; how to kook, hunt, trrrap, and even how to dance."

"I like dancing. My mom loves it when we dance and sing! She tries to get everyone to do it even when we aren't doing any ceremonies."

"Zat sounds fun. I never had a mom. What is she like?"

"Oh, the best! She's really nice and lets us do most things we want and even lets us sneak food when the elders aren't looking. She even made me my bow." Seneca reached behind him and pulled out a small wooden bow carved with patterns and animals. "She made

my brothers one's too, but mines better cause she made it first."

The small boy held out the bow for Russia to look at. He took it gingerly, examining the wood carving and the strength of the bowstring. There was a leather strap where his hand would grip the wood, the edges decorated in colored beads.

"See that? Those are the hills," Seneca pointed to a pattern of half circles then moved to the carved animals. "And those are my clans right there! My brothers have their clans on theirs, but Onöda'geh is lame cause he has an eel on his. Do you know what eels are?"

Russia nodded and gave him his bow back. "Arrre clans some sorrrt of symbol forrr something?"

"Yeah kind of. We have lots of stories about them, but my favorite is the bears! They're so big and strong and fluffy, and they can climb trees, too. One time I tried to have a race with one to see who can climb a tree faster. A branch broke and I fell so he won. But I will get a rematch!"

Russia laughed, thinking his story was made up. Most kids he knew liked to blur the line between reality and fantasy because reality could be rather boring. He remembered doing that as a kid as well, pretending to be various characters and playing make-believe with his siblings. Some memories were fuzzy and faded, but he did manage to hold onto some good ones. He'd rather not think about any of the bad ones, shoving them aside when reminiscing about the past. Wither he remembered their shunned presence or not was uncertain, but again, how many of us would?

The two continued to talk and share stories, both relating to having many siblings (Russia did beat him in the number) and the different arguments and fights they would have, having a single parent (Even though many other tribes would help raise Seneca and his brothers along with other young tribes), and the fact that they were older brothers who protected the younger ones. Seneca was happily telling Russia everything about their cave system, how it even ran under his own land, and where some of the cave openings were. When he mentioned a few artifacts that sounded like they were from the world wars, Russia tried to pry more out of the boy about

those. Instead, Seneca asked who was the white and pink cat with the two boys on the video cameras.

"What do you mean?"

"On the cameras we found. There were videos of them together, but it's mostly the boys and some others."

"The 'kat lady's' name is Japan, and the boys might be South Korrrea and Norrrth Korrrea. Wherrre did you find zese kamerrras?"

"Near the edge of the village. We found them while we were moving and hide them from our mom. She doesn't like us having things like that, so we had to hide them. But they weren't speaking English so we never knew what they were saying."

Russia nodded along as Seneca explained. He was laughing to himself, his eyes focused in the distance as he remembered watching, who he now knew as Japan and one of the Koreas, pulling a prank on a very tall red man with long hair. They tried that same prank on a few of the adults and got in trouble, but it was worth it.

"We made some of our videos with them, I hope they don't mind. Since we couldn't give them back, and I don't really know where they live."

"Don't vorry, South von't karrre. Not anymorrre at least," Russia reassured him, wondering if South ever went back to find those cameras. Probably not, he seemed scared about what happened then and the story they told about a creature. Canada was too scared to talk about it, and everyone seemed to follow him. Even Ukraine. She was hard to scare, so seeing her refuse to talk about it worried him. Of course, he was ready for such a thing whenever he went into the woods and was met with nothing so he ruled it off to them seeing some animal and in the dark, it spooked them.

"Can you talk to wolves?"

"What?" Russia couldn't help but chuckle at such a strange question.

"The big wolves that live here, they are said to be scarier than the

wolves I know. And you dressed like them, so are you like their alpha?"

"Oh nyet, I avoid zem too. Zey arrre rrreally dangerrrous," Russia looked out into the woods. They would never come this close to the house, not after his dad had regularly shot them when they got dangerously close. Russia would have to fire towards them occasionally, never directly killing any if he didn't have to. By now they had certainly learned to stay away from the house and accompanying trails, at least when someone was on them. They still unsettled him.

"When I vas a kid and my dad took me hunting, I almost got attacked by one," Russia looked at Seneca who was looking up at him with an excitedly curious expression. "I vas skarrred to shoot a gun at an animal, having never done it beforrre. My dad vas trrrying to show me what to do, rrreminding me how to firrre korrrectly so I didn't hurrrt my arrrm. Ve almost didn't hearrr a volf sneaking up behind us. It lunged at me and my dad tackled it. He trrried to kill it but the volf had him pinned down and he vas using his gun to hold it avay frrrom him. When I saw my dad vas in danger, I had nyet fearrr orrr worrry. I rrremembered everrrything he taught me and managed to kill it.

"Ve got to take it vith us, but had to hurry bekause volves alvays trrravel in packs. My dad vas prrroud of me, zough. A big volf as my firrrst kill. He brrragged about me to a few other kountrrries, and I felt rrreally prrroud of myself too."

"Did you save the fur?"

"Da. My dad vanted me to have it forrr a while, so he made it into a blanket. When I got older zough I made it the lining of one of my koats to keep me varrrm."

"Can I see it?"

"Da, I kan go grrrab it," Russia stood to go inside and grab it. As soon as he rose, he instinctively glanced at the woods and froze. "Strrrange."

"What is it?" Seneca looked to where he was looking. He noticed a large dark mass between the frosted trees decorated with white snow. It was moving slowly, heading towards them. Seneca stood, resting his hand on the hilt of his knife, keeping his eyes trained on it until he could figure out what it was. When it got closer it seemed to grow in height, still partially blocked by the fur trees. A low rumble came from the creature and Seneca looked up to see what Russia would do. This was his land, his territory. Surely The Wolf would know what to do best to protect his territory.

He watched Russia as he casually strolled off the porch. He walked towards the useable creature, no sign of readying for a fight so Seneca let his knife go and hurried to follow him. Whatever it was must have been friendly then.

The trees and covered flora parted way for the large animal as Russia waited patiently for him. He had always moved a little slower now that his dad had passed on, never quite the same from the loss. But still, the bear was like family to him. A living piece of history, from the time his dad had him as his national animal.

The big brown bear came stumbling out of the woodline, standing on his hind legs trying to see past the tree branches that had blocked the view of the house. He opened his mouth, letting out a softer groan of sorts before falling onto all fours again. He stumbled his way over to Russia slowly, shoving his big snout in his face, sniffing at the country. Russia laughed, trying to look away so the bear didn't lick his face as he thought he would.

"Good to see you, Stepan," Russia patted his head, ruffling his fur as he did.

"Stepan?" Seneca asked poking his head out from behind Russia to look up at the bear.

"Zat's his name," Russia explained as he backed up, trying to keep distance between Seneca and the large bear. He was bigger than the average that lived around in the area, being his national animal. But he was a little more hostile with strangers than he was with Russia. Even to a few of his siblings, he was iffy.

"Cool!"

Seneca ducked under Russia's arm and ran up to the bear, hugging him the best he could. Russia flinched to grab him away from Stepan but held himself back as to not startle the animal. If he panicked, Seneca would be perceived as a threat and Stepan could attack him. He watched nervously, keeping an eye on how the bear acted as Seneca patted its fur.

"He's so soft," his voice was muffled by the thick fur he buried his face in. Stepan grumbled, trying to sniff the tribe hugging him, not seeing too much of the boy. The feathers on his headdress brushed against his small nose and he sneezed. He stood on his hind legs to get away from whatever was touching his nose, the force of his movements causing Seneca to stumble back.

Russia pulled Seneca towards him, thinking Stepan's actions meant aggravation. He got prepared to fight, in case the bear turned hostile. Instead of attacking them, Stepan fell back onto his rear and rubbed his nose with his paws.

He was too tired to try and fight and had actually came to Russia's place to nap and eat. Being a partly immortal animal (national animals lasted as long as their countries would) he didn't necessarily need to eat nor hibernate like other bears, but he preferred to. And he remembered Russia would always feed him and his house was warm.

"Hmm, he's not attacking," Russia let go of Seneca and looked up at the bear questioningly. Stepan was usually a little hostile, at least to others he didn't know. Why he was letting Seneca hug him was confusing, if not interesting.

"Of course he's not, he's a big softy!" Seneca smiled, running to the bear and jumping onto his stomach. Stepan looked down at the tribe, sniffing his head and nudging his headdress off before licking his hair. Seneca complained about it, looking up to fix his hair and Stepan licked his face instead. Russia chuckled at the boy turning away and wiping the bear's saliva from his face, clearly grossed out.

Stepan grunted, looking towards Russia.

"He's hungry," Seneca said as he dug in his little bag. He pulled out a few berries and held them out in his palm for the bear. Stepan happily ate the small treat, and as soon as he did he began nudging the tribe for more.

"Hmm," Russia hummed to himself watching Seneca feed Stepan. He was able to correctly tell what he wanted, something Russia sometimes struggled to do. And Stepan almost immediately allowed the boy to get close to him, despite him clearly wearing the pelt of a bear.

Wait. That might be it. Maybe Stepan smells the scent of another bear and thinks he's a bear cub. Obviously, a friend if he was with Russia, too. That would explain his reactions to him. But Seneca seemingly understanding him was a little harder to explain.

"Seneca, have you vorrrked vith bearrrs beforrre?"

"Hmm? Worked with them? I don't really work with bears, but I do like them and like to play with them. Plus I can understand them."

"Underrrstand them?"

"Yeah," Seneca beamed up at Russia while Stepan ate from his hand. "I can understand a lot of animals. Bears, deers, hawks, herons, beavers, wolves."

Russia nodded, taking note that those same animals were the same ones he saw were engraved into the boy's bow. Clans he called them.

"I have morrre food forrr him inside," Russia whistled and Stepan looked up at his country. He nudged his head towards the back door and the bear didn't hesitate to head towards the house. More food was inside. And a warmer place to sleep.

"I'll just be a moment, did you vant to vait herrre?"

Seneca wiped his hand on his pants before picking up his headdress and putting it back on. He looked up at the huge house and thought. There was no one home, Russia had said. It was cold out here, even if he was dressed to withstand it, it wouldn't hurt to step

inside for a second. Plus he didn't want to leave Stepan just yet.

"Can I come inside?"

"Da, you kan."

Russia led the two inside, Stepan having a little bit of a hard time squeezing his way through the door. Seneca was excitedly looking around Russia's house, looking at all the little trinkets he had and the pictures he hung on the wall. The wallpaper was a dark red, decorated with intricate designs that reminded him of old haunted houses.

On the table that was by the staircase, there were little decorative pieces, what looked to have been wooden Russian nesting dolls, a crooked ceramic bowl that held a few keys and keychains, and a few replicas of strange-looking buildings. A huge picture frame hung on the wall above the table. Seneca smiled at the old picture, knowing that one of those kids was The Wolf when he was young. Behind the kids, he recognized the looming figure that was Russia's dad. His arms tucked behind his back, his shoulders squared, a mean look on his face, and the black eyepatch that had his famous hammer and sickle insignia sewed on.

Seneca quickly looked away.

When Russia was done mixing some food for Stepan, he walked back into the living room where he had left the two. Stepan had pushed away one of the couches to make room for himself on the rug. He was laying on his stomach, his paws stretched out. Seneca had laid himself on top of Stepan, curling into a small ball.

He kind of looked like a bear cub in a way, with his dark cloak giving him that appearance.

"Zerrre you go big guy," Russia pushed the bowl of mixed food towards the bear. He sat up a little, Seneca sliding off of him and landing on his feet.

"Won't he get into the food in the kitchen?" Seneca asked as he adjusted his shirt and headdress. Russia shook his head no,

explaining that Stepan was trained to behave in the house. And he would probably just sleep the whole day anyway.

"I do have an imporrrtant question forrr you, Seneca," Russia said as he patted the bear's fur.

"Yeah?"

"Is zerrre any way I kan talk to someone? Like yourrr mother?"

Seneca looked down and rubbed his heel into the ground. "I. I'm not sure. My mom can't know I was out here, I'd get into so much trouble."

Russia nodded, trying to think. "Well, kan you tell me wherrre you guys arrre now? So I can find you and not get you in trrrouble."

Seneca stayed silent, only mumbling a few things under his breath in his language so Russia wouldn't understand him. He did want to bring Russia back with him, just to show his siblings he could do it. And if he could show his mom he made friends with an outsider, he can prove they don't have to keep hiding. That they can live freely back where they used to. That they can try and get their brother back.

"Please, I'm trrrying to help Amerrrica."

That was the ticket.

Seneca looked up at Russia, his nervous fidgeting halting as soon as he finished his sentence. They both knew that the other was valuable to get what they wanted, and were willing to help the other reach their overall goal. Russia was uncertain with the history that America had with these guys, but based on how Seneca looked up at him with hopeful eyes, it wasn't always bad. There must have been a time where things had been good. A hopeful longing for the past, Russia could recognize that look anywhere.

"We want him back," Seneca mumbled under his breath before looking up at Russia. "I'll take you to my mom. But we have to see my brothers first, I can't do anything without talking to them."

Russia agreed to his conditions and got his already packed things. He didn't expect to be away for as long, now that the amount of time he assumed it would take him to find something useful was removed. Better safe than sorry, Russia kept everything he had already put in his bag, grabbing that and his coat. Remembering the small conversation, he grabbed the one that had the wolf's fur sewed in it. He hadn't worn the coat in a while so it took him a moment to find it. The light fur mixed with a bit of darker strands poked out of the sleeves and lined the edges of the hood, covering the inside. The lighter color was contradicted with the darker brown fabric that made the rest of the coat. He had a small hidden pocket inside, big enough for him to fit his father's journal in it. It would make it easier for him to carry it, so he slid it in the pocket after he put the jacket on.

Another chance to sightsee, I suppose. I hope you know what you are doing.

Before leaving, Russia left a note for his siblings, explaining that he was going to be gone for a little while again but will be back soon. And that be careful cause Stepan is sleeping in the living room.

"You know what I find funny?" Seneca asked as they walked out the back door, him jumping down the steps.

"What?" Russia locked the back door, slipping the key into his pocket.

"That you're called 'The Wolf' and you have a pet bear."

"Vell, I like to zink of him morrre as a frrriend zan a pet."

"Hmm. That's weird. Don't wolves and bears not get along?"

"I don't zink zey do. Maybe ve arrre the differrrence, zen. Tvo differrrent species getting along despite everrrything. What do you zink about zat?"

"I like it."

"I agrrree."

The two smiled at the thought as they walked into the woods, one dressed in the fur of a bear, the other a wolf. The Wolf and The Bear.

Two unlikely friends.

**I'm back baby. Might not have my full drive back, and I feel as if it's noticeable in this chapter but I tried so. Can't push myself too far, as much as I want to. But hold onto your hats everybody, things get complicated from here.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Worried Trio

**Didn't do accents for this one just to see how it feels for now. If it doesn't vibe right I'll probably go back to it.**

**Narrator's POV**

America was laying in bed, clicking off and back onto his messages with Russia. He had been trying to get ahold of him for a while now but was met with silence on the other end, even being left on read would have brought him some comfort by now. But there was nothing. He wasn't active on anything, everything saying he was on a few days ago.

He wasn't just ignoring America, he had been completely ignored everything.

It was a little comforting, knowing that it wasn't just him. But still, that begged the question; where was he?

"Come on, Ruski," America mumbled to himself, his voice dry and husky. He winced as soon as he spoke, shutting his eyes from the pain. His throat was still sore, putting it lightly, having just had yet another episode the day before. He could barely speak still, not without sounding like a heavy smoker that lived in a place where the air was only smoke and smog.

His voice was like that when he awoke back in his bed a few days ago. It hurt to speak, to even move actually. His wrists stung from being restrained, a feeling that now became overly familiar and always intertwined with shame and guilt. He was never told what happened, but it wasn't necessary to. It was the same, screaming, fighting, every now and then breaking free from his restraints and attacking his family. There was nothing much to be said about it, not that America would have liked to anyways.

Something did feel different about the episode he had when he was with Russia last. America couldn't put words to it, but it didn't feel

the same as the others. He couldn't remember what had happened, not past a certain point, which made it hard to explain. How could he feel different about an event he doesn't properly remember, it made him sound crazy.

At least that's what America believed.

His bedroom door opened, America instinctively shutting off his phone. Standing in his doorway was Canada, who held the doorknob and leaned in as if stepping a foot beyond the threshold would bring upon it something horrible. Of course, he was always walking on eggshells during the aftermath of a rather violent episode from America.

"America? How are you feeling?"

"Like shit," he forced out, holding back an expression of pain.

"Aussie found another one of those small little rabbits if you wanted to see it. He-he said he would bring it up here, cause ya know," Canada rubbed the back of his hands, nervously gesturing towards America and then fidgeting with his hands.

America tried to sit up, his arms trembling from the effort and his blanket he had wrapped around himself falling off his shoulders. He tried to talk again, but his voice failed as soon as he tried to form his response.

"Did you want me to bring you up water? Or something to eat? I can tell Aussie not right now, too, if you need-" Canada was interrupted when America held up his hand.

"I'm fine, just my throat," America signed with trembling hands instead of talking. "He can come up here."

Canada nodded, turning to leave but then he paused, looking back to America. He asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

America thought for a second, looking down at his phone. With his hands, he asked, "can you get ahold of Ukraine or Kaz to see where Russia is at?"

"Of course, I'll be right back then," Canada nodded before quickly leaving. He hadn't spoken with Ukraine in a little while, only doing so to make sure she was okay and if she needed a cover. Of course, they'd talk as friends too, but Canada had been drifting away a little with everything that had been going on. No one could blame him of course, but he still managed to put unnecessary shame onto himself.

Australia came upstairs with the little rabbit while Canada called Ukraine outside America's room. While America tried to pet the small curiously sniffing animal, Australia watched how he moved to make sure he didn't do anything too strenuous. Which included talking.

When America looked up to say something, Australia immediately interjected with, "don't talk, you know you aren't supposed to speak."

America rolled his eyes but stayed quiet. For once maybe he should listen, he thought as he brushed the back of the fluffy bunny. Its small nose twitched as it sniffed America's nearby arm, the white whiskers brush against his skin. Its fur was soft, albeit a little dirty, and America fought the urge to pick him up and cuddle him closely, both for the bunny's sake and his own.

"I couldn't get ahold of Ukraine," Canada said as he walked into the room, the two looking up at him, "but Kaz said that Russia hasn't been home in a few days."

"What?" America asked before rubbing his throat.

"He said that he left a note saying that he was going to be on a hunting trip for the next few days and that he would be back soon."

"Sounds like everything is fine, then," Australia looked back and forth between the two, not understanding the worry. There were times where Australia went off on his own for a few weeks as he went out and studied animals or hung out with his friends. Surely even Russia does the same.

"I don't know, Aussie, Kaz sounded really worried," Canada rubbed the back of his neck. "He said it was sudden, and usually he would

say something a day or so before he left. And he said he found another set of footprints outside their house, but he couldn't really tell so he didn't think much of it."

"Guys," America spoke up, speaking quieter to see if that would help his voice. It didn't but he didn't care. "I don't care where he is, I need to talk to him. Even if I have to hunt him down in the fucking forest."

"You should stay and rest," Australia stood up and crossed his arms. "With how you've been feeling you are not getting anywhere any time soon. If you need to talk to the guy I can go fetch him for you. Tie him up and throw him in the back of my truck if I have to."

America smiled at the joke, trying not to laugh cause of the pain he knew it would bring.

"Thanks but I think that would make him angry," America started coughing, grasping at his throat. The rabbit that was in his lap, startled by the loud noise and sudden movements darted off of America's lap. Australia held out his arms to catch him but acted too late. The small animal zig-zagged its way around the room before darting out the slightly ajar door.

"Fuck, be right back," Aussie said as he ran out of the room. His voice could be heard growing fainter as he tried to call out about the animal.

"Aussie's right, Ame," Canada sat down at the edge of the bed. He paused when a loud crash and a few shouts were heard downstairs. "You are in no condition to go anywhere," he finished.

"I don't care," America's voice sounded as if sandpaper were inside his throat, grinding up rocks as his vocal cords were forced to be used.

America pushed the blanket off of him and moved to stand up but Canada quickly stood to make him sit back down.

"America, if you are really worried I can go find him for you. I know how to track, and I can withstand the cold more than you."

Opening his mouth to speak again, America winced. Growing irritated, he raised his hands and signed, "I can't let you go alone."

"I can ask Kaz to go with me. Or Ukraine. They know those woods better than me," Canada said as he stood to go get ready to go to the sibling's house. Before he left, he paused and then said, "I'm going to get Aussie to watch you so you don't follow me."

America groaned and fell backward onto the bed.

Canada left his room, grabbing some things he would take with him whenever he went hiking in his land. As he packed he called Kaz and told him what he was going to do, and asked him if he could help.

Kaz agreed, getting ready with his own stuff. He told Canada it was relatively safe but to bring a rifle in case they run into any dangerous wildlife. And to not come inside whenever he gets there because there is a bear inside.

He had to explain further who the bear was and that he wasn't willing to be the one to tell him to leave. You try telling a bear that's like 2x your size to leave the warmth of a house. Do it you won't.

As soon as Canada was ready, he went downstairs and told Aussie to watch America for him then headed out to Russia's house in his truck.

When he arrived he was greeted with a hug from Kaz. He had waited for him outside, both because he wanted to waste no time to see Canada and because of Stepan.

"Okay, where did you find the footprints?" Canada asked, adjusting his bag strap and his axe attached to it. He knew Kaz said to bring his rifle, but it was more of a long-range weapon and not as useful short-range. As long as they kept their distance they would be good. Plus he felt more capable with an axe.

"In the back," Kaz answered, leading Canada where he found them. By now they were faint, filled in slightly with powdered snow. The

indent was still there. What was more difficult to see was the evidence of anyone else with him. The easiest thing to see was the bear tracks, though.

"There were smaller ones, I know," Kaz tried to reaffirm what he had seen.

"I believe you," Canada paced the backyard.

He felt his phone buzz in his back pocket but ignored it. He was busy trying to find anything that might be useful.

"How long has he been gone again?"

"3 days about."

Canada nodded, knowing it would be harder to track now.

"Was there anything weird in the house? Or outside? Besides the um bear."

Kaz shook his head no. "Just the tracks. And a feather."

"Feather?"

Kaz nodded and pulled it out of his small satchel. Canada took it, looking at the brown colors with darker brown patterns. It was a turkey feather.

"I don't know what bird it is from," Kaz said, answering Canada's question before he can ask it.

"I know. You don't have any turkeys around here do you?"

"Turkeys? Turkey hasn't come this way I don't think."

"No, not Turkey like the country. I understand the confusion though," Canada patted Kaz's shoulder and he understood that he wasn't trying to talk down to him. "Turkey is also the name of a bird that I find around my land. And America's."

A deep pit in Canada's stomach formed. It couldn't be.

"What is wrong?" Kaz set his hand on Canada's arm when he saw his expression change to one of shock.

"I. I can't say but," Canada looked at the feather again and put it in his pocket. "I think we should see if there is some sort of trail left in the woods before. . ."

Canada trailed off, his fingers hovering over his eyepatch. He had realized why he had it a while ago. But what could he do? It was years ago, he couldn't do anything about it now. The past was past, he can't speak for his past self's actions. That's what he told himself at least.

Kaz grabbed Canada's hand and squeezed it. Canada looked down at the country and he gave a weak smile.

"I'm okay," he lied. The guilt hit him immediately and he quickly added, "I'm sorry, I'm. I'm not but I can't talk about it."

Kaz nodded and said, "it is okay. You can tell me when you are needing."

Canada nodded and looked at the faint trail that lead into the woods. He held Kaz's hand and walked into the woods. He blinked a few times before asking if he was okay with him taking off his eyepatch. Kaz nodded and Canada did so. The last time he saw his eye, his iris was a light grey but he swore it had darkened. Or maybe he was remembering it wrong.

The pair followed the footprints, stopping occasionally because they thought they heard something walking behind him. They didn't see anything, but seeing how paranoid Canada started to become Kaz offered to fly above the trees and see if there is anything around them.

"Okay, just be careful okay?"

"I will," Kaz said before flying up between the trees and circling like a vulture. It was a little difficult to see past some fur trees, but with the empty branches of some, he was able to keep Canada in his line of sight.

It was a few minutes before he spotted something. About 16 meters (50ft) or so behind Canada was a shadowed figure. It was ducked behind a tree, trying to stay hidden. It looked humanoid, so Kaz tried to move quietly by landing on a branch of a nearby tree. He could see Canada, his red hair and skin contrasting greatly against the white ground. The figure, which Kaz could faintly tell was wearing a green coat with a brown colored something around the hood. Perhaps hair?

It sneaked its way out from behind the tree, silently trailing behind Canada. Kaz dove down from his perch and tackled the figure as soon as they turned their head.

In a flurry of colors and snow, Kaz pinned the figure down, his knee pinning down both of their legs and his hands holding the unknown country's hands behind their back. The country had cried out in pain, gasping for air having just had the wind knocked out of them.

"Who are you!?" Kaz shouted in English, hoping the country spoke it.

Canada, hearing the commotion, turned around and spotted Kaz on top of something. He heard what he had shouted and started to run over to him.

Kazakhstan held the person's gloved hands with his one and with the other, pulled down the brown fur-trimmed hood. The white hair with red stripes and a section of blue with stars was immediately recognizable and Kaz let go of his tight grip.

"America!" Canada slowed to a stop in front of the boys, seeing his brother looking up at him. His sunglasses had fallen off his face, revealing his black eyes, but he quickly put them back on before Kaz could see.

"Hey bro," America held up a hand to wave, his voice still sounding rough. It didn't help that Kaz was still on top of him.

"Is he not," Kaz paused when he realized he couldn't remember the word fast enough. He hoped Canada would know what he meant to say and finished, "he not here?"

"He's not supposed to be here, no," Canada crossed his arms, looking back at his idiotic brother. "What happened, I thought Aussie was watching you."

"As if I'd tell you," America tried to get up, nudging Kaz so he could get off of him. Kaz, somehow not recognizing the fact that he was still pinning him down, stood up and stumbled off of America.

"America," Canada's tone warned him to tell him the truth.

With a sigh, America said, "I hid in the back of your truck and I hid Aussies phone so he couldn't tell you I was gone."

Canada pulled out his phone and checked his notifications and all he had that was relevant was a message from Zee asking if he knew where Aussie's phone was.

"Where did you put it?"

"Locked it in my bathroom. Turned on the shower so he would think I was in there."

"Of course," Canada texted back Zee before putting his phone away. He held his arms crossed and was looking down at his brother, his jacket fur decorated with melting snow, patches of it hanging onto his jeans, soaking into the fabric.

"Why aren't you wearing better clothes?"

"I didn't have enough time to get dressed for everything, I had to get," America started coughing and Kaz panicked thinking he was the reason for it. He held his shoulders to try and get him to stand up straight, instead of leaning over like he was.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," he patted Kaz's hand. "Just a little uh. Under the weather. But I had to get to your truck before you, so I didn't have time to grab anything besides my coat and shit."

"Well, you have to go back. You're in no shape to be here and you know it," Canada grabbed America by his coat. He tried to lead him back the way they came, but America instead unzipped his coat and freed himself from it.

"No," he said stumbling away from Canada, who held his coat in annoyance. "I need to talk to him, and im going to help find him."

"America, it's not-"

"Safe? Smart? I know, but," America paused, giving his throat a rest for a second as he tried to figure out how to piece together his words.

"I know this is dangerous, but I don't care. I can't just keep lying in wait, I need to talk to him."

Canada looked at his brother, his stance was weak and his legs trembled slightly. He knew America wouldn't be able to go far, not without him straining himself. But he also knew America would not give up and if he went on his own, he would be in more trouble. Best to let him do something stupid with someone else around to help him afterward rather than have him go off alone and not have that help.

"Okay," Canada let out a defeated sigh. He held out his coat for him to take. "You can come with us. But as soon as you can not walk anymore, you have to tell me."

"I will."

"Promise?"

America hesitated and then nodded. "Promise, cross my heart, hope to pie, stick a cupcake in my eye."

Satisfied, Canada tossed America his coat and ruffled his hair. "Alright then, you didn't see anything, did you? We've just been following what's left of their trail."

America slipped on his coat and shook his head no, not bothering to give a verbal answer.

"What about you Kaz?"

After a moment of thought, Kaz shook his head no, too. He didn't notice anything in the air, but he did have a strange feeling in his

stomach. He couldn't explain it, it was almost like a pull. It was something he was used to a little, but it had somehow gotten stronger the further they went into the woods. It was a warm feeling, so he didn't worry.

The three decided that the best thing to do then was to follow the trail before it could snow more and leave them with nothing. Of course, they would eventually hit their dead end.

No one could follow them and Seneca had requested that be possible. So, Russia walked around in circles for a little while, overlapping his prints, walking backward to make a dead-end and leave anyone who could follow their tracks confused. Russia doubted anyone would follow, but better safe than sorry.

He was lead to a secret entrance hidden by a rock wall covered in snow and was guided through the maze of tunnels. Seneca was able to identify the paths below the island better than the above ground, which spoke for how long they have been under there.

The first thing they did was find Seneca's siblings. He explained to them his idea, and what Russia wants as well. That they can help each other out and move to a better future, one where they didn't have to hide. They liked that idea, of course, but also because Russia was cool to them.

And it was against the rules to even have him there, which enticed them even more.

But, they were found out almost instantly. It had been almost a day of Russia being hidden for someone to find out about it. Hiding a country, one as big and as noticeable as Russia, in a close-knitted community was almost impossible.

Expecting to be attacked or harshly interrogated, Russia mentally prepared himself for the worst. What he didn't expect was for a woman to sit with him.

"My children are fascinated with you," she had said, offering him food and water. He didn't eat any of it, not until she took a bite and sip from it to show that it was not poisoned.

She explained her name was Haudenosaunee-most called her Haud-and that her kids believed that he can help them with America. But most of the tribes there believed him to be a threat, someone manipulating the hopes of a small child for whatever malicious gain he might desire.

"I'm not trying to manipulate anyone, I need to know what happened to America, why he has what he has," Russia had tried to reason with the woman, trying to explain himself. She held up a hand to silence him and said that they do not need to hear his case right now. He will have his chance to speak. But for now, he must be prepared to wait while until the council can decide on what to do.

It had felt like a whole day had passed before Russia had the chance to speak to anyone. He was brought food and water and blankets for comfort, something he didn't expect. Again, he tried to think of the worst possible situations in times like these so he knew he would be prepared, and if things turned out better then it would be a pleasant surprise.

When the time did come for him to explain why exactly he was here, much less "tricked" a kid to bring him back to the only place thus far that has been able to keep everyone safe, Russia had what he wanted to say prepared.

"I'm friends with America, and I don't know how much that means here, whether it's bad or good, but I know you all know him," he had said to the group of tribes that hid their faces. They were gathered on a raised stone pedestal that created a half-circle, almost encasing Russia in a spotlight.

"It means everything to us," said one of the cloaked figures, by her voice Russia recognized her as Haud. But her tone didn't let him know if the meanings of her words were positive or negative.

"Well, he means everything to me," Russia had asserted, puffing out his chest and keeping his stance strong. "And he's hurting, I think he's sick, im not completely sure what it is he has, but I know it hurts him. And I know you have something to do with it."

They had shown no reaction to his words, not past the slightest turns in their heads to look to the others seated.

"Look, I don't know what he did to you, or how long ago that was, but I promise you that who he is today, right now, he doesn't deserve anything like this."

"You know nothing about what he has done," a male figure said, leaning slightly over the podium-like table he was sat at.

"And you know nothing about what I would do to keep him safe."

The two looked at each other, Russia not being able to see the other's eyes or face. Still, he stared directly where he imagined they would be.

"I believe him," a woman spoke up, catching the attention of everyone. She explained further, "he knows nothing about who we are, or what we are capable of. And yet he keeps his stance, ready to face anyone for America. He's either very loyal or very stupid."

The same woman had turned to Russia and asked him, "Tell me, boy, are you stupid?"

Thrown off by the question and being referred to as a 'boy', Russia lost his words for a moment. "N-ny-nyet. Nyet, I am not stupid."

"He is defending America, can we really believe that?" Someone else muttered.

"Hush," Haud stood, lowering her hood and for the first time Russia saw her face. She had a purple flag with some white design in the center, bright maroon irises that attracted the most attention. Her hair was braided, parted so that it rested on both of her shoulders. She had a young face with worry lines under her eyes that didn't seem to fit her.

"I have taken full responsibility for America before, I shall take full responsibility for his friend as well," Haud said, glancing down at the country then back to the others.

"Haudy, I can't let you do that," a male figure said, turning his full

body towards her.

"And why not? He has done nothing yet to prove to us he is a threat; no attacks or insults. He did not harm my children and, given the circumstances, has been nothing but respectful and patient."

When she had been met with silence, she had urged, "all he wants is answers, to help my son. And perhaps my kids are right, he could help us in return."

She turned to Russia and asked, "Is that not the agreed-upon terms you'd want?"

"I want to help America," he answered. "I'll do anything to get me there, so da. Uh, yes, that is what I'd like."

"Alright boy," an elderly-sounding tribe stood, using a wooden staff to help him. "You may wait while we discuss."

Being called boy felt weird, but Russia didn't voice that thought and instead allowed himself to be escorted back to where he had been pulled from.

He was pacing around in the small room, ignoring what the two armed tribes were saying. It's not as if he understood them anyway, since they weren't speaking in English. He had waited for what felt like another two hours before something happened.

Haud, with her cloak's hood down, stood in the cave's archway and smiled. "You will walk with me and I will answer any question you have."

Russia stood and nodded, walking towards her.

"But," she said and he stopped in his tracks. "You will answer mine as well, and these two will have to walk with us."

One of the guards leaned towards her and whispered something in her ear. She nodded and mumbled something back to him and he walked off.

"This one and one other tribe will be walking with us as well."

Russia nodded, hesitantly walking forward in case of any other conditions. When Haud didn't speak again about any, he said, "okay, I can work with that. Where are we walking to?"

Haud hummed, a small on her lips and she turned to walk down the cavern. "Just around. I find it's better to walk and talk."

Russia eyes the guard with a painted face that covered his flag and followed behind Haud. She didn't ask many questions, as Russia thought she would. The ones she did ask were not what he had thought they would be.

"Are you hungry?"

"Do you need a different jacket? It can be so cold here sometimes."

"How are you feeling, you aren't ill are you?"

Of course, Russia would try to be as polite as possible and answer her questions. But, in all honesty, he was trying to memorize the paths they took as they walked. He created a layout in his mind to get to the places he knew; his mini cell, the room the six kids hid him in, the judgment room, along with some others he noticed.

He really should have been paying more attention.

Something feathered slapped him in the face and he sputtered to a stop.

"What was that?" Russia asked, wiping his face. He noticed Haud chuckling and heard a few suppressed snorts from the guards behind him. It was then he noticed that the second one had joined them.

"Nothing," Haud stopped walking, turning towards Russia. She began adjusting his coat collar, fluffing up the fur and straightening out his hat. "Now, I do believe you have some questions?"

"Da," Russia shook off the strange thing and tried to think of his questions wisely. There had been no limit that he knew of, so keep

them from answering vaguely and stay level-headed. No getting angry, stay calm, but still show emotion.

"What is your relation with America?"

"Well, for me," Haud turned to him, stopping at what looked to be a cave opening covered with some cloth. "He's my son."

Haud lifted the cloth, a burst of cold air rushing into the cave along with a bright light. Through squinted eyes, they all stepped outside, Russia trailing behind a little.

"What do you mean he's your son?" Russia asked, rubbing his eyes. The snow crunched underfoot and the sun's rays reflected off the ice particles creating a glitter look. He had been lead outside, but the surroundings didn't match the cave entrance Seneca had lead him to. There was what looked to be a small village outside with a few tribes walking around. They all were minding their own business, too busy to bother to notice that an outsider was there. Or they already knew of his presence and felt reassured enough to not worry or bat an eye.

"Wolf!" A child's voice called.

Russia looked over and saw the small figures running at him right before he was knocked to the ground.

"See, I told you he was still here." One of the boys said, Russia couldn't see who. His ushanka was over his eyes and he lifted it to see. The boy, he believed his name was Onondaga, was clinging to his chest in a tight hug along with Seneca.

Russia tried to sit up, giving a small, "hey," as acknowledgment. He was quickly knocked back down when all the other boys piled on top of him, one of them even yelling "doggy pile".

"Kids, you can't be here," one of the guards said, using the blunt end of his spear as a way to fend them off. Mohawk, the one Russia recognized to be the boy who was more skeptical of him, tried to do as told. He got onto his feet and tried to pull on one of his brothers.

"Boys," their mother warned, slightly bending down to speak to

them. "You can play later, Russia and I need to talk."

"But after your done, you're just gonna lock him back up again, aren't you?" Seneca tried his best to look up at his mother, but one of his brother's feet was on his head.

"That is entirely up to him," Haud eyed Russia, who had been looking at her the entire time.

"Better listen to your mom, kiddo," Russia urged, trying to get back up. Seneca frowned but nodded and elbowed his brother to get off of him.

When they stood, one of them hit the arm of another and yelled, "Rory is it!"

Everyone scattered, and Rory sighed and chased after whoever was closer.

Haud laughed, offering her hand for Russia to use to help stand and he politely took the offer. He stood back onto his feet and tried to brush off the snow that had gathered on his clothes before they could fully melt.

"They miss America, too."

Russia raised a brow and followed her line of sight. She was looking at three of her sons, two of them running around a tree while another was in its branches. A different child ran over to them, that one Russia hadn't seen before until then.

"He was your son?" Russia asked, trying to find any form of resemblance between them. There was nothing that was inherently obvious, maybe the white on the flags. But the color schemes worked better with Britain and France than her. "I thought his mother was France?"

Haud blinked and for a moment looked as if she had forgotten how to breathe. "The France I knew cared not for my child, only his feud with Great Britain."

"His?" The confusion was a whisper under Russia's breath.

"America isn't my child in blood, but that didn't stop me from loving him as if he were," Haud started walking, keeping her expression calm and her face forward. Russia wasn't given a second before he was urged forward with a shove from one of the men with his spear. He didn't hesitate to follow behind the woman.

"I was young when I first met him, but not a stranger to the new countries that came from overseas. We had managed ourselves quite well at first, but with rumors of attacks and murders from the southern tribes, we had to remain cautious when word of another was spotted close to us. Even if he was just a mere child at first.

"I wasn't there when he was first found, but the tribes that did only realized he wasn't a threat after they found his body on the shore."

"What?"

"It had appeared that he drowned," Huad hadn't noticed that Russia was apparently new to this information and continued. "We took him in and he traveled between tribes, learning everything he could from them. He took a lot of interest in my family's way of governing, and used it as the building blocks for himself."

"Wait, I'm sorry," Russia interrupted her and she turned to see what was wrong. "Did you say he drowned?"

Haud's eyes widen slightly as she realized. "Yes. Yes, he did. He couldn't have been more than 9 years old at the time, by looks at least. We don't know what had happened."

Russia couldn't think to do anything then ask, "how could he have . . have . . ."

"I assumed he was trying to swim back to his home," Haud didn't let him finish his sentence, not that he could have anyways. "He was brought to a new land at such a young age, he must have been scared."

Marking the end of that grim topic, Haud continued walking and asked, "what about you? What are your relations to my son?"

"Um," Russia rubbed the back of his neck. That was a loaded

question, wasn't it? His best bet was to be honest, but he didn't want to be honest with himself much less a stranger. Half-truths then.

"He's my best friend."

"You sound hesitant to say that."

"Well, it's. It's been kind of complicated lately," Russia admitted, not daring to say anymore. Of course, answering with short vague responses only got Haud to urge him to talk about it further. So, not finding too much harm in it, he added, "I was stupid and I hurt him, so I'm trying to make it up to him."

Before she could say anything else, Russia quickly asked, "why does he have his black eyes? His episodes?"

Haud slowed to a stop and closed her eyes. She knew the question would come up, she had tried to prepare her answer before they went on the walk, and still, it was difficult. But now faced with it, she could feel the dread weighing her down like iron chains.

The change in her demeanor wasn't hidden, and neither was it in the two tribes that had followed them. They held similar looks of distraught, but Russia couldn't tell if it was for something they did or pity for Haud.

"It was so long ago now, I," Haud paused and tried to form the words. "It was my fault."

Russia suddenly didn't feel safe, if he even had before.

"I was responsible for him. Anything he did, I had taken the blame for. But when he turned on us, burning our crops, our villages-our homes-attacking us, killing us, I," her voice broke and one of the men moved to comfort her. He wrapped his arm around her shoulder and whispered something that Russia couldn't hear.

Haud said something back in a language foreign to Russia and he grew weary of where he was. The sudden rush of anxiety he felt was unwelcomed, more so than usual. He had to remain calm. Get what he needed and help America. The get out.

"Tell me Russia," Haud turned to Russia again, her eyes filled with tears. Her hands were folded behind her back and she looked for a moment like the world had crashed around her.

"What would you do to protect the ones you loved?"

"Anything," Russia didn't hesitate to answer.

"Don't."

"Wh-what?"

"Don't do anything," Haud warned, her tone dropping gravely low. She walked closer to Russia, slow steps at first, and he found it harder to control his breathing. "Know your limits, draw the line you will not cross right now. While you are not in a fit of rage or wallowing in sorrow because someday there will be a time when you are faced with that situation and you will regret not knowing when to stop."

Tears streamed down her cheeks, dropping one by one. Her face was inches from Russia's, who was leaning back and on the verge of hyperventilating.

"I didn't have that line," Haud looked away and Russia closed his eyes to concentrate on his breathing. Calm your nerves Russia, stay calm. You can't do anything right if you are emotional, suppress for now. Feel later.

The sound of feathers ruffling made Russia open his eyes again. He half expected Poland to be there but was met with the same landscape, the same village, and the same people. No Poland.

Haud was adjusting her cloak and wiping her eyes when she said, "I was angry, betrayed. My own son turned against me for reasons that are still unclear to me. When I could no longer ignore the evil he was doing, I tried to stop him.

"But, it was obvious that he couldn't be stopped. He knew us, our weaknesses everything. He had more advantages. So I. I cursed him."

Russia said nothing and he did not dare to move.

"It was dark, forbidden magic, something one should never use under any circumstances. But, I was so angry, so hurt. I cursed him. Cursed him to feel the fire he burned us with, for him to speak the language he wanted to destroy, to taste the blood of the ones he slaughtered.

"Did you know he loved his eyes?"

Russia shook his head no and Haud hummed.

"I did," her gaze glazed over and she shook her head ever so slightly. "Of course I did. What's worse, I was smart.
I knew that a simple curse he would be able to live with after a while, even if it took years, decades, or centuries. So I made it able to learn. To grow. To make sure it hurt for as long as he had it."

At a loss for words, Russia didn't even know how to continue. What to say or even ask. What even was he supposed to do here? He got the answer he needs but. This? This was it? He got what he deserved?

"But, but America is different now. There is no way he would commit genocide, he's changed," Russia couldn't stop his voice from quivering. The America he knew was reckless, a little paranoid sure, but was kind at heart. He would never do something that Haud had just described.

"I know."

"Then why can't you stop it? The curse, everything? Can't you remove it?"

"I tried!" Haud yelled, sounding desperate. "I tried. It can't be removed. It's changed, evolved so much that nothing I have done has worked."

"Why can't you bring him here? Talk to him? I get that you're scared of him-"

"Scared of him?" Haud interrupted him. "No. *He's* scared of us."

Seeing Russia's confusion, she explained further, "America doesn't remember anything he has done. He refuses to accept that he was responsible for all of that death. I tried to face him after he was cursed after his life was renewed and he broke down in fear. His mind was shattering, not being able to cope with what he had done. The mere sight of my face nearly drove him mad."

"Is that why you all cover your faces?" Russia asked, looking to the two who stilled had dark paint on to cover their flags.

The three nodded.

"We have to stay hidden. For our safety and for his. But we will always be connected. Curse or no, memories or lack thereof. When he was in our last village, I thought it was him showing us he was ready to face us again, for better or for worse."

"He didn't know, none of us did," Russia tried to explain why they were there. That it was a Halloween trip, that no one knew what it was. Not fully at least.

"I know now. But I'm afraid that the interaction was too early. That it only made things worse for him. The last thing I want is for him to break again."

"Again?" Russia dared to ask after a second. He didn't know what to expect from his question, but he knew it wouldn't be good.

By then they had walked around the village and found themselves at a part where there was a dying fire in a bit along with empty seats. Haud motioned for Russia to sit down across from her while she poked at the glowering embers. Small strips of smoke rose from the darkened pit, twirling around before slowly fading into nothing.

"Can you get some wood for us?" Huad asked one of the men. He looked from her to Russia, silently asking if it was safe to leave him. "Oh, he's not going to do anything."

Not that much reassured, the man walked off to go get some firewood.

"Ma'am," Russia tried to bring the focus back to his question. "What

did you mean by 'break again'?"

The silence, even if was only for a few seconds, felt like hours to the both of them. For Russia, it was the holding of the information, and for Huad it was knowing it.

"Do you know what happens when a country has a civil war?"

"Da. Most countries split into two, everyone knows this," Russia answered.

"Yes, there have been a few exceptions, America being one of them," Huad poked at the smoldering embers with a long stick, a few small flames appearing before fluttering out. "He managed to hold himself together, not sure how. He wasn't in my care then and we all had to keep our distance. From what I was told, he had managed to forget the worst parts of everything that had happened, knowing it happened but not to its fullest extent."

What she said checked out, Russia thought. America seemed to always forget whenever something bad happened, and it makes sense he would be this good at it if he had been doing it for his whole life, and further than that. It was his coping mechanism, to forget and move on. But he knew that wasn't good, it would only hurt him more later.

The man who had walked away came back with some firewood, holding his spear at an awkward angle. The other guard went to help him and they both carried the timber to the fire fit. Both Haud and Russia moved a little to allow the two men to work on reviving the fire.

"You came here to help him, yes?"

"Da," Russia nodded.

"Then we want the same things. You can approach him, you can talk to him, something none of us can do," Haud shooed the two guards away before they could even start the fire. She waved her hand over it and the sound of wood popping came before the flames burst to life. When she notice Russia trying to hide his shock, she

chuckled.

The heat felt good, even if Russia could withstand the cold longer than others, it did feel nice to feel the warmth of a fire. He took his hands out from his pockets and held them close to the fire, seeing that the other two guards had done it. The light danced on their faces faintly and the shadows of things close to the fire were deepened, flickering with the flames.

"He needs to remember."

Russia looked up from the fire to Haud, noticing she was looking up at the rising smoke instead of the flames.

"In order for him to heal and to grow, he needs to make do with his past. With us, as well. He needs to, he's poisoning us. He's poisoning himself."

Himself? What she's saying makes sense as well. His episodes have been getting worse, and no doubt Russia being dumb hasn't helped at all. But with knowing only broadly what he had learned, would it even be safe for America to know? He's different than what those past versions were, why did he have to suffer for something he didn't exactly directly do? The country fears that other countries may think he's a bad person, so imagine if he found out that he might be.

Do you think he's a bad person?

Russia didn't like that question, so he ignored it. How could he even answer, he's only heard one side of the story, he cant form an opinion based on little information. And besides, he trusts America. He knows he's different.

"Must be draining."

"Hmm?" Russia snapped out of his thoughts and looked up at Haud. The immediate eye contact he was faced with made him think she had asked a question and he hadn't heard her. "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

Haud looked beside Russia for a moment before looking back at

him. A chill ran down his spine and he quickly looked around him. There was no one there, the four of them were still alone.

"Nothing," Haud cleared her throat, waving some of the smoke that had begun to drift towards her away.

She was obviously lying, they both knew it was obvious to tell. So, before Russia could ask anything, Haud spoke first. "You seem hesitant to help now. He is a good country at heart, you must understand."

"I know he is, even if he pretends he's not," Russia looked down at the fire and smiled thinking about America and his little attempts to make him and others smile. How can someone be so worried about being labeled as bad and be okay with pretending that he was?

"He's. He's always trying to do something for someone else, getting himself in trouble sometimes because he's willing to break the rules for the countries he cares about. He does things like that for me, too, even when I wasn't nice to him."

"Then why the uncertainty?"

"I"-Russia rubbed his hands together nervously-"I don't know."

"I only want what is best for my son," Haud reached across the fire and placed her hand on top of Russia's. "I can see that is what you want as well. This is difficult, hearing this from strangers instead of America. He just doesn't know, and that's why we have to tell him. It may give us the answers to removing the curse."

Russia blinked. "I thought you didn't know how to remove it?"

"I don't. I'm hoping that this could lead us in the right direction."

Haud could see that Russia looked uncertain, and how could he ever make a full decision based on his own feelings if that specter was hovering around him? He couldn't see it, which makes sense, but Huad could. Not easily, she had to focus but even then it was a vague dark shape of a person. The way it moved and looked almost like it was warping around the large country, it was tied to him. Or to something on him.

With something like that around him, who knew if he actually came along on his own volition.

"You don't have to make a decision right away," Haud stood, brushing out her dress. "You are free to walk around and talk to the other tribes if you want."

"Haud, I thought the council said-" one of the guards started to say before Haud interrupted with, "I know what they said. That's while you will stay with him. Every other tribe here has their own story about America they can share if they want."

Russia stood, looking at the other two guards who were surprised that she would just leave them with him. He was a little surprised too, knowing how unsafe that was for anyone to do. Especially when they had been attacked by someone close to them, wouldn't that mean they would be less trustful of anyone else that was even similar to the last attacker? Strategically, it didn't make sense either. Unless this was some form of test Haud and the other hooded council members were trying to set up.

If it was a test, Russia decided he would pass. And it seems like to do that it would be to talk to the other tribes. Or at the very least look around. It would be better than sitting down by the lonely fire.

He watched as Haud walked away before being called over by a group of female tribes. Should he walk in a different direction then? Where would he even walk to? He's an outsider, he knows nothing about these people. He's at a disadvantage. He's very much like a guy at a party whose only friend there just left him.

As he began to sheepishly look around, trying not to let the awkward feeling they had been left with, he slowly walked away from the fire pit. America had lived with these tribes for years, in a life way beyond the one he has now. They never mentioned much about how America would remember them now, knowing that he was very much a different country whose life hadn't begun that long before Russia's. But some memories carry over after a country dies, even if it is rare it can happen. The more he thought about it, the more he realized America could very well be one of those people. It might be why his brain is trying to forget so much because it relates

to a life that wasn't his. He wasn't supposed to remember.

He must be so scared.

And he was. Presently it was because he couldn't find Russia.

They had reached the dead-end of the trail, and by then America was barely holding himself together. One, because he thought something bad could have happened to Russia, and two, it was getting harder to pretend that his body wasn't screaming from pain.

"I don't understand, it looks like he just walked in circles," Canada scratched his head, squinting down at the faint footprints. He had been slightly worried about their tracks mixing in with Russia's but with the differences in size and clarity, it wasn't a long worry.

"Maybe something up?" Kaz suggested, pointing up into the trees.

"It looks like he climbed this mound," America chirped up, looking at the snow-covered rock mound. There were what looked like finger indents in the snow, but it wasn't clear. Could have been just an animal or snow falling from the trees above to give it that illusion.

"Kaz, can you see if there is anything on top of the rock?"

Kaz nodded at Canada's request and jumped up, flying above the rock. He didn't notice anything out of the ordinary and instead flew a little higher to get a better aerial view.

"Do you see anything up there?!" Canada yelled, watching Kaz circle around them.

"No!" He called back. The faint feeling of warmth in him suddenly felt like it was pulsating, urging him into a direction. Confused, he looked to wear the feeling told him to look and saw nothing but empty treetops. He drifted in the direction, knowing he would find something. He didn't know what, but it was something.

"What is it?" America tried to yell up at him, but it came out rough and barely louder than a mouse's scream. He cleared his throat, rubbing his hand over it to try and massage away the pain. Maybe

if he ate some snow it would help.

"Kaz, what do you see?" Canada called for America, subconsciously moving to follow him.

"I don't know!" Kaz yelled down, landing on some branches to look around better. "I think there is something this way! I don't know what it is!"

"Should we follow it then?" Canada asked, turning to America who was crunching on some snow. He shrugged, praying that Canada wouldn't notice how his arm was trembling from holding the small snowball up. Hopefully, he'd just think he was cold or something.

"Keep going, we'll follow you!"

Kaz nodded, climbing up the tree more to get more room before taking off into the sky. He flew lower to the tree line and tried to move slowly so that the two on the ground could follow him. There was something out there, he could feel it. But what was it? The sensation that seemed to pull him towards something. Something warm. He knew it was warmth. Whatever it was. It was similar to the feeling he got whenever he made his wings glow but *different.*

Whatever it was, the three hoped it would clue them to whatever happened to Russia. And as Kaz was pulled towards the heat of the village's fires, they would soon be able to get their answers. For better or for worse.

**This should not have taken me this long to write but hey I kind of expect it at this point. Anyways, during a probable ADHD fueled creative extravaganza i decided that it would be a cool idea to make another book about Prove Me Wrong. Like filled with some concept art, maybe mini spoilers, character designs, unused chapter ideas, and things that were originally supposed to happen. Might make those little chapter ideas into actual small short chapters, i don't know yet.**

**But i thought it would be cool and an easier way for people to get roughly the same amount of info about the story and i guess lore cause wow this book has that now. But that is where**

**i will be putting the rest of the Q&A (yes i have not forgotten about that) and maybe some future ones if ya'll want.**

**Oh, maybe i should post fanart in that too. I used to put fanart in here and it was fun seeing it all but then it got deleted along with the first book. Sad. But hey if ya wanna start that up again, that's where we can do it.**

**Anyways, it's 4am lets hope I didn't leave any mistakes.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Ahh Shit

[image]

**Video for context. But also remember in the truth or dare chapter I had those videos of the dance and songs added in. Forgot to do that when I republished but they are back in that chapter again.**

**Narrator's POV**

Things were a little less awkward when Russia found himself in conversation. While wandering around and looking at the vast differences between some of the housings the tribes used, someone called him over.

It was a young group of men who were sitting together and singing with a few children around them. Seeing no better option, Russia went over to them.

They had him sit down with them and he was about to ask them some questions but they had a different idea. One of the men pulled out a stick with a leather ball tied to it at one end and handed it to him. Russia looked at it, unsure what to do. It was when the men raised the ones they held above a large cylinder object with some leather of some kind stretched around it did he have a clue.

Anyone could recognize a drum when they saw one.

"Wait, but I don't know any of your songs," Russia tried to protest before they could start.

"Don't need to," one of the men said before he added with a chuckle, "You know how to hit a drum right?"

Russia looked at the instrument, thinking what kind of question was that. Of course, he knew. The kids around them were even holding their own small handheld drums with sticks. It was then he realized that they were all boys, noting that maybe it was only the males

who played.

When they all started drumming, Russia tried to stay in rhythm. It was fairly easy, being a simple task. It was when they sang Russia couldn't join in. He listened to them happily instead, trying to make sense of words he thought sounded similar to ones he knew.

Eventually, the two who were supposed to be guarding Russia joined in as well. It didn't take long for them to have their face paint wiped off, as requested by some of the older-looking tribes. Not that Russia would have even recognized their flags.

"This one is good," an older man had said to convince the two men. "No need to treat him like a stranger anymore."

How he had determined Russia was "good" just from having him sit and bang a drum was something he couldn't fathom. He decided to rule it off to an old person thing. If the kids he met had really been 1000 years old, and he was seen as an old man, maybe he's just seen enough of the world to just simply know.

Imagine living that long. Gross.

In between songs, Russia would ask a few questions and from what he learned, his previous guess was wrong. The women do sing and play instruments as well, but they usually play in groups with themselves as they were doing.

There were around 500 of them hidden across the vast underground cave systems, all varying in age and strength and homeland. And trying to walk through every tunnel and pathway would take weeks to do, a lot longer if you didn't know the paths by heart as well.

And no. No, they would not like to discuss the bad parts of the past. Not right now, at least, not while they could sing instead.

Still, Russia would much rather learn all he could as fast as he could. But he also understood the hesitation. It was personal for them all. It was easy for Russia to ask and try to talk when it didn't affect him.

When the small circle lost a few members, namely the older-looking

ones, they decided to stop. Russia was invited to hang out with the tribes that appeared to be around his age, which surprised him. They were all roughhousing, trying to pin each other to the ground as a show of dominance.

Dominance, and something else Russia guessed when he noticed a few female tribes that were standing and watching. They giggled and waved at the guys and when one winked at Russia, he awkwardly waved back and tried to avoid eye contact with all of them.

To make it fair, they only went one on one. Since Russia was taller than anyone there he felt as if he could be the exception to that rule and convinced them that he could fight two of them at once easily. He did that with Kaz and Kyrgie all the time, so he was used to being attacked on two fronts.

There were a few times where he got knocked to the ground by a surprise attack but he managed himself well. It was actually a challenge compared to his brothers.

But of course, while Russia found himself wrestling with a tribe named Kiowa things seemed to go downhill.

He was pinned to the ground, Kiowa holding his arms behind his back while trying to pin his legs. Russia noted that this tribe and Comanche, who he figured was his brother or something, were the two that could beat him. Everyone around him knew that they weren't trying to hurt each other, even the two who were assigned to watch Russia. But to anyone else who saw the scene, they wouldn't have known.

That's exactly what happened with Kazakhstan.

He had spotted the village, momentarily forgetting about the two on the ground following him. He didn't hear Canada call for him to wait as he had to help his brother walk. The pull towards the village got stronger and with how worried he was about Russia, he couldn't think of anything else.

The cold air had stung his eyes as he flew so he had put on his

flying goggles, the ones that were tinted to help him see better with the glare from the sun and the snow. His scarf was pulled up to cover his face more, so at a glance, he looked threatening. It didn't help that he had his sword on him as well, even if was slightly masked.

Once he got closer to the village, close enough to spot his brother being pinned to the ground by two unknown countries, Kaz reacted fast. He narrowed his eyes, clutching the hilt of his sword, and dove down.

A few tribes spotted the winged country and cried out. Everyone paused for a moment to look at the sky and see what was happening, including Russia and the ones on top of him.

Kaz landed on the ground, the classic superhero pose with it, his wings spread out to their fullest wingspan and his curved sword held out in front of him. His scarf loosened around his mouth from the movement, just enough for him to clearly yell, "Get off my brother!"

A few tribes screamed and ran, children running to their guardians as everyone made their way into the cave entrance. The two tribes tasked with guarding Russia picked up their weapons and got in a fighting stance. Russia was pulled to his feet by Comanche and was being dragged away to follow the crowd.

Before he could even yell or pull himself away, a dark figure ran past him. The wind swirled around, almost pulling off his ushanka as he saw two massive black feathered wings seemingly grow from the back of the tribe. In the flurry of colors and movement, Russia couldn't see who the figure was at first until he noticed the purple braided hair and the outfit that Huad had been wearing.

She stood in front of Kaz, the wings that came from nowhere dominating the size and span of Kaz's. She herself looked as if she had grown a few feet in height, her eyes appearing as if they glowed. She raised her hands and with them, a bow grew from nothing and she drew back an arrow, aiming right at Kaz.

Behind the goggles, Kaz's eyes grew wide at the sight in front of

him. The lady was massive and her wings were almost double his own wingspan. He felt small, smaller than he normally did next to Russia.

At that thought, he glanced past the purple figure and spotted Russia trying to get out of two people's grasp.

"Let my brother go!" Kaz shouted, lifting his sword and digging his heel in the snow, ready to lunge.

"You are a trespasser," Haud lifted her head slightly, never wavering or taking her eyes off him. "You are in no position to make any demands!"

"Haud, wait, that's my brother!" Russia yelled to her, tearing himself free from the two tribes he had been fighting with. He tried to run to Huad to try and calm the situation but was held back by the guards.

"Please, Kaz, lower your sword!"

"They were fighting you!" Kaz yelled back.

"Just do it!"

A moment of silence passed as Kaz looked between Russia and the threat in front of him. Most of the people that had been there having fled but a few were gathered around. They each had their own weapon and were bigger than him, he wouldn't have much of a chance fighting off so many. And he couldn't escape to the skies if he had to, this lady in front of him had wings too. He had no choice but to listen to Russia.

Slowly, Kaz stood up, holding his sword away from him. He looked Haud in the eye as his arm shook, his hand slowly starting to loosen his grip on the hilt. He glanced at Russia, who was silently watching with pleading eyes. He looked okay, with no evidence of any wounds. His clothes didn't look torn up or dirtied with dirt and blood. Some bits of snow but other than that nothing.

Kazakhstan sighed, looked down at the snow in front of him, and dropped his sword.

"Take it," Haud said, looking to a warrior tribe to her right. The tribe put their sword away and quickly moved to grab Kaz's.

"Lay down," she pointed to the ground in front of him with her still drawn bow.

Hesitantly, Kaz got down on his knees and laid down on his stomach, tucking his wings in. Understanding what needed to be done, two tribes walked over to him and he was patted down. When they didn't find any other dangerous weapons on him, he was pulled to his feet and held by his arms for restraint.

"How did you find us," Haud walked closer, her wings slowly lowering.

"I felt warm."

"What does that mean?"

"In my chest, I felt warm."

"He doesn't speak a lot of English, let me talk to him." Russia once again tried to go to his brother but was held back by his guards.

"Bring him here," Haud ordered.

The guards grabbed him by his arms and walked him over to Haud, keeping their spearheads pointed at his neck. Russia tried not to show any fear, that would cause Kaz to panic, and tried to keep a calm expression. Even if he could feel his arms start to tingle from how tight the guard's grip was.

"Kaz, what are you doing here?" Russia asked in English so that the ones who didn't speak Russian would know that he wasn't trying to say some secret message.

"Я пытался найти тебя. Что случилось? Ты просто ушел без предупреждения. (I was trying to find you. What happened? You just left without a warning.)"

"I'm sorry, I needed to help America and these guys know how. I can't explain everything to you right now. How did you find me?"

"Мы шли по твоим следам в лес, пока не уперлись в тупик. Потом я почувствовал странное притяжение, не знаю, как описать его, просто оно было теплым, и я знал, что оно ведет меня куда-то, что может помочь. (We followed your footprints into the woods until we reached a dead-end. Then I felt this strange pull, I don't know how to describe it, just that it felt warm and I knew it was leading me to somewhere that could help.)"

"What did he say?" One of the guards who held Russia asked.

"He felt some strange pull here, he doesn't know what it was," Russia answered, glancing down at the still dangerously close spearhead. "W-wait, what do you mean 'we'?"

"America and Canada."

"America?" Haud's eyes widened and her arms dropped involuntarily. The arrow she held disappeared in a shimmer of light, just how it appeared. "And Canada? They, the both of them? They are with you?"

Russia felt the guards tense up more, and from the looks of it, Kaz felt it, too. They shared distressing looks, unsure what to do.

Kaz nodded, looking worried at the sudden change in atmosphere. Was it bad to mention those names? Are they going to be killed now? Kaz hasn't died before, not that he could remember at least. Wait, no there was an accident when he was a kid. But still, that was forever ago, he didn't want to die now!

"Maybe this is a good thing," Russia tried to reason. "America is coming to you all in his own free will. You can finally talk about everything, explain things to him."

Haud turned to one of the older tribes that was standing behind her and they both started talking in another language. Double standards, but Russia and Kaz were the intruders so.

"Explain what? Russia, what is going on?" Kaz asked, looking at Russia confused. He had been acting so weird lately but he figured it was because things got all weird with him and America. But no

matter how upset he got, does it excuse him for running out on them? He's been starting to ditch them all ever since he started hanging out with that country. He hasn't even figured out where Ukraine had been going for the past few months! The old Russia would have been on top of that situation and already solved it by now.

"It's complicated," Russia tried to explain the best he could, knowing that it wasn't his choice to say anything. Even so, seeing Kaz frown and look away from him caused a pit in his stomach to form.

"It's too risky now, we have to wait until America's mind settles," Haud said, turning back to Russia. "Everyone, we gotta get back to the cave before-"

"But his episodes have been getting worse! You can't just leave him like that!"

Haud motioned for everyone to head back, ignoring Russia. She'd have to explain to the boy in further detail later, they can't risk anything not with what the visions have been saying. They should have never meddled with anything, natures laws are the laws they should have followed. Now that America is left fragmented, he can break again. Then he could grow stronger.

Russia tore free from the two guards that have started to try and drag him back to the cave with the others. Kaz was trying to do the same, but he wasn't as strong as Russia and it was harder to get the upper hand when he had wings that could get in the way. The most he could do was trash and push himself into the two guards that held Russia so that he would have enough time to get away. Just hope he comes back this time.

Russia grabbed Haud's arm and started to try and pull her towards the woodland that Kaz had come from. Canada and America had been following him, they had to still be on their way.

"Let go, we have to hide!" Haud yelled, grabbing Russia's wrist to tear herself free.

"No! I will not let you leave him! He needs you!" Russia yelled,

ignoring the pain in his wrist as she twisted it.

"If his episodes are getting worse, that is not our doing! They reflect the state of his own mind! If they are bad, it's because his mind is!" Haud lifted her wings and propelled herself back, dragging Russia along with her. He managed to stay on his feet, a little disoriented albeit.

"Well then help him! You're his mom, you can't leave him! A parent shouldn't leave their son alone when he needs them the most!"

The realization hit hard, so the one who understood did what he could.

As Haud raised her wings to fly into the air again, she was stunned for a moment. The shimmering figure, it conformed around Russia and as soon as it did, his grip was tightened. He radiated with strength and power, the change in energy surrounding him threw her off for a second

Immediately, Haud bent her knees to jump into the air but almost as soon as she did, Russia grabbed her arm with both of his hands and he flipped her, flinging her onto her back.

Disoriented, Haud sat up and rubbed her head, feeling patches of snow stuck to her tangled hair. The snow did help to cushion the impact, but it didn't help with the stinging she felt in her wings.

"Haudy!" One of the guards shouted as they ran to her. The two as they argued didn't even notice that Kaz had been trying his best to hold the four back. It was easier cause to break free he headbutted one of them in the jaw, effectively knocking them out. But eventually, he was pinned down by two again. Fortunately, by then Russia had made his point.

"Enough is enough!" Russia shouted, angrily clutching his hands into tight fists. "You have to face this head-on. America will only get worse if he is constantly kept in the dark!"

Haud rubbed her wings as the guard helped her stand up. She momentarily lost the added height she had gotten and her wings

shrunk down to a ratio that suited her size more. Her skin started to sting from touching the snow, some bits of it going down her dress and running along her back. It felt as if a knife had been tracing itself along her spine, taunting her before it plunged itself into its previous place.

She already had a deep metaphorical scar from the last time she has placed her trust wrongly. How dare an outsider come in and try to do the same, try to tell her what is best with a situation he has only known about for a day compared to her centuries.

"You know nothing about what could happen! There is a greater threat that we have to face strategically! If we do anything too soon we will lose our one good chance!"

"Russia!" Kaz shouted as he tried to pull away from the two holding him. They had managed to drag him back towards the cave entrance, a good few yards away from them now.

Hearing his name, Russia glanced back to see his brother being restrained. For a moment his anger had left him and the sudden adrenaline rush he had flowing through him wavered. His focus was split and even if it was a small moment it was enough to throw the connection off completely.

His legs shook and the world around him started to spin, teeter-tottering in place. All his energy and reserved strength seeped out of him, where it went Russia didn't seem to have the energy to think.

Slowly he knelt down to one knee, laying on it and using his hand to help balance himself.

"What the hell?" He asked to himself, not realizing he said that out loud.

"Come on, it drained him, we have to go now before it's too late," Haud said, watching as the shimmering mirage around the boy faded away, dissipating into nothingness. It would come back, but not for a little while.

The small chuckle that came from Russia had them both look at him confused. He held his head up slightly, his tired eyes gazing past them.

"Too late."

Haud looked to where he was looking and froze.

There, right at the woodline stood America and Canada. The two were frozen, both from the cold and from what they were seeing. A village, similar to the one they had found and visited before, but this one had objects that showed it was currently in use. Not to mention the tribes that were standing frozen, all without their face coverings.

Time slowed down for everyone there. Canada noticed Kaz being held by the arms by two tribes he couldn't fully recognize before he noticed much of anything else. America on the other hand, registering Russia was kneeling in the snow, but too distracted for it to click on his mind. All he saw was Huad.

Her flag, the purple with the white designs. He remembered what they represented, who they represented as well. He remembered those eyes, those same maroon eyes that shimmered with glee when he first met her and that had become hollow when she regretted it. The tears that filled those eyes, that streamed down her face, the horrified expression as the light of fires danced around her, and as the blood of family was sprinkled on her cheek and staining her clothing.

All at once, he was faced with the embrace of the memory of a comforting hug and then the numbness that came with it. He was too stunned, too horrified, too many things at once he couldn't understand. No one then could, the only one who could ever was the woman he was looking at. Everyone else around him, even his brother that held his arm wrapped around him to help him walk, could only feel fear. In that single moment that lasted as long as a second ticking by, every possibly conceivable emotion passed through the two as they stared at each other.

Neither one of them could have believed it.

A cry caught in America's throat, he could only think of one thing to say.

"Mom?"

**Wooowee, that was a mighty short chapter. But it didn't take me three weeks to do so imma take the happiness on this one and call it a day! Next one will be a lot longer.**

**I did make that second book tho, its called PMW Extras so if you are interested you can go find that in my works. I already have some things up as well, more noticeably a chapter I wrote high while having this one in mind. Wanna see the drastic differences, specifically in characters, you can read that over there.**

**Whooo, we love a good promo. Anywho, I'll see ya'll next time!**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Roll Credits

**Narrator's POV**

Imagine you are in a forest. Lost and alone in the dark. Cold, scared, and desperately trying to find a way out, a way back to anything you knew. Civilization, sound, light, just something. Now imagine as you are stumbling over roots, walking into trees or tree branches, and tripping over the thousands of things that could be laying around, you spot something. In the distance, you see a light. You hear a sound. So you go to it, hope pushing you to move, to ignore the pain you feel in your feet from walking for hours. Your throat that hurts from crying, yelling, and screaming, now stinging from your heavy breathing.

You come to a fire. No one is there. It's just a small fire pit in what looks like a campground. There are no tents, no evidence of people. Just a small cleared circle with a fallen log for a seat and dug out pit with fire.

Would you stay by the fire or would you keep trying to find your way out?

The fire has warmth, light, safety. To leave it would to risk losing something that can keep you alive. Wild animals avoid the fires, they are a premonition for death to them. You could stay and rest, gather your thoughts. Even if it isn't better, a light in the dark is a light in the dark.

But who built that fire? Doesn't matter, this is a metaphor.

But staying by the fire for now, at least until the sun rises, seems like the best thing to do, yes?

"What the hell?"

Now imagine this, you can do I believe in you, America was the one in the metaphor. He wasn't lost in the woods per se, but he was lost

and in the dark. He has been wandering around for years, unsure where he going or where he came from. He's passed from fire to fire so much he doesn't even remember a life before that.

So suddenly, faced with sunlight for the first time in forever, he's stunned. The memories of his life before the eternal dark forest come rushing to him as fast as the sunlight on his skin. Too fast to understand, he could only shield his eyes and squint at the bright light as he tried to comprehend everything at once.

But almost as soon as he recognized the sun, he was thrown back into the darkness. Not by his own choice, no. And not in a metaphorical way, either. He got knocked out.

Haud panicked and raised her hand at the two boys, exclaiming, "së:dah! (sleep!)" The air in front of her hand shimmered and the boys collapsed to the ground where they stood.

The only ones who weren't stunned enough to move were Russia and Kaz, who ran to America and Canada, respectively. They were still breathing, appearing to only have been rendered unconscious.

"This is why we don't let outsiders in!" A tribed said, starting a chorus of others to join in on the atrocity.

"We never should have trusted this outsider!"

"He lead them to us!"

"We can't keep doing this."

"Swadáöhdi:yos! (You listen carefully!)" Haud shouted over the voices, trying to calm them. They ignored her, angrily shouting instead to take care of them, do something, knock the other two out too so they can get away. That if she didn't do it, then they would.

Sensing the threat, Russia grabbed a nearby staff that was dropped by someone and held it, ready to fight with it. Kaz, without his sword, held Canada and America close to him, extending his wings over them both as a form of shield. He looked to Russia for direction, getting ready to jump and run if he had to.

"No! No fighting," Haud forced herself into everyone's line of sight by putting herself between the other tribes and the outsiders. "We don't want to start a war, we can't afford to lose more than we already have."

"Than what are we to do?" A man shouted angrily.

"We can't go back to hiding anymore now. They know, they won't give up."

"Maybe this is a sign," Haud looked over her shoulder to the four countries. She knew that they would fight if they had to, both sides no doubt. She didn't want to have anyone get hurt, or worse. But her son. Barley seen between golden feathers, unconscious and laying on top of his brother. He was her main priority, all her children were. "We have no choice but to act now. We can stop it before anything happens."

"Before what happens?" Russia asked, daring to relax his shoulders a little.

"We can't trust them, Haud," one of Russia's former guards spoke before she could answer him. He placed his hand on Huad's shoulder and she turned to face him. "I know you want to, but we can't risk it."

"Navajo, I," she tried to say but her voice failed her. She believed they wouldn't do anything to hurt them, but she had also wholeheartedly believed the same thing with America. Could she really put much trust into that? "Put them in the jail."

Navajo nodded, walking past Huad who stood still and raised his spear. "You will come with us peacefully, or we will use force."

Russia narrowed his eyes, his grip tightening around his spear. High risk, outnumbered and two countries acting as dead weight right now. Kaz is unarmed and can't escape to the skies. Russia can maybe hold them off for a second, but the way it looked they wouldn't get far. He couldn't risk anyone's lives.

They had been peaceful up until now. Hopefully, they will stay

negotiable.

"Kaz, listen to them," Russia said, looking back to his brother. They locked eyes, a small moment of understanding passing between them. Kaz nodded, folding his wings in and Russia dropped the spear.

Despite Kaz's instincts, he didn't fight back when he was lifted and pulled away from the two unconscious countries. He even tried to hold back his grimaces of pain when the tribes forced his arms behind him, pushing onto his wings. When he passed by Russia, he saw he didn't fare any better. The way his eyes were forced closed and his jaw clenched, he knew he was just in much discomfort as him.

He hoped he knew what he was doing.

A few more tribes emerged from the cave, all properly covered with cloaks and face paint. They carried with them what looked to have been something close to a gurney, one for America and one for Canada they presumed. They were right when they saw the two boys be placed onto their own and carried behind them.

They were forced down the same part Russia recognized, knowing where they were being led. Most likely the same cell he had been kept in before meeting with the council. It would be easy to create a plan if they were all together in there. But he had to be prepared to be separated. He knew his siblings had been trained for situations such as this one and should know the various plans if they had been separated and needed a plan.

"Помнишь нашу собаку? Спот возненавидел бы это место, (Remember our dog? Spots would've hated this place,)" Russia chuckled, looking at Kaz. There he was promptly hit on the head and scolded for talking.

"Наша кошка чувствовала бы тоже самое, (Our cat would've felt the same,)" Kaz added before he was hit on the head, too.

"No talking," they were warned once more. Not daring to oppose them a third time, Russia just looked at Kaz worriedly and nodded.

He tried his best to look behind him to see if the cloaked ones that were carrying Canada and America were still behind him. He couldn't tell with the low lighting and he barely got more than a second to look before his head was forcefully turned so he faced forward.

Navajo was the name of one of his guards, he thought. It was only then he noticed they hadn't given him their names. The others he had met had happily told him who they were, except for those two. Maybe it didn't mean anything, Russia didn't ask after all. Still, he made a mental note of it.

"Aknó’ëh? (Mother?)" A voice called from ahead and everyone slowed to a stop. A small figure ran to Haud, who was in the front leading the way down the cavern. Russia recognized the voice and knew it was Seneca. He stood in front of his mother, looking past her to see the two outsiders restrained. Before he could see more than that, Haud stepped into his line of view.

"Odöni'a:h, sahdë:dih. Ëhsáhdë:di’ ya:hak. Akno'ëh degë:hö:’. (Baby, go. You have to go back to your aunty. Mommy is busy right now,)" Haud tried to turn her son around and push him back the way he came.

"Aknó’ëh, sa’a:gë’ de'hehsátgaëöh (Mom, you said you wouldn't lock him back up,)" he objected, trying to stay put. He pointed to Russia and added, "otá:yö:nih neh ögwádéó’shö’, sasha:a’s? (the wolf is our friend, remember?)"

"Hä:gwas o’gi’, Onödowá’ga:’. (I said it was up to him, Seneca,)" Haud glanced up and locked eyes with Russia. Knowing for certain they were talking about him, he looked away with shame written on his expression. "Ëšánitgë’t ëtösë:nö:k o'gäsah gakwa, nyoh? (Now go, they'll call you for dinner, okay?)"

Seneca looked between his mother and the group of warriors and sighed. He was greatly outnumbered and he didn't want to get into trouble with his mom. Maybe he can sneak back to where they would be keeping them. Then maybe he can beak him out as they had done before.

"Nyoh, (Okay,)" he said meekly before running off to where he knew he could hide and follow the group of warriors.

Haud led everyone down to where Russia was originally held before, and where he thought he would be held again. Instead, Kaz was thrown in, thankfully he landed onto the blankets that were on the ground, and when Russia expected to be thrown in next, he was shown to be wrong. The two that held onto Kaz stood at the entrance to the cavern and Russia was pushed ahead.

"Wait, let me stay with him he's my brother please!" Russia tried to protest, trying to force himself back but the ones who held his arms close pushed him forward.

"Do not worry, Russia. I'll be okay," Kaz shouted, brushing off the small pebbles that had stuck to his skin. He looked around, trying to find something that could help but all that there was were the blankets he was sitting on, two empty clay bowls, and possible rocks that could come loose if hit with enough force. No doubt the guards that were practically in front of him would stop him before he could do anything about the last one.

Hopefully, Russia would fare better than him.

He didn't, why would he anyway? That's no fun.

Russia was tossed into an empty carved-out cell, with no such luck of a soft landing. He held back any sounds that he was in pain and quickly stood onto his feet. The two he had originally been guarded by stood in front of the only exit. He kept his mouth shut, hoping that maybe if he stayed in line he would be offered some leeway.

And like a dumbass gay, as soon as he saw America being carried by, rational thought went out the window.

"Let me go with him, please," Russia tried to run to the unconscious country but was promptly halted by his guards. They held their spears in an x formation to cut off his entrance, a warning to stay back or they will not hesitate to use them.

Haud had heard him and paused. The desperation in his voice, it

tugged at her heart, keeping her in place. Rational wanted to push her to carry on to where they would hold America and Canada, to do what they have to before anything gets worse.

"Please, I can't leave him again, let me stay with him!"

"Haud, you okay?" A tribe that stood behind Huad placed their hand on her shoulder. She turned to face the tribe, knowing who they were behind the dark face paint. A dear friend that had helped her for decades, someone she wouldn't have wanted to be separated from in a frightening situation. The imaginary scene that played in her head that put her in Russia's footsteps invaded her mind without warning and without permission. It mixed in with her own fears and the various emotions that had come back with the presence of America. How could she argue against that?

"Let him come with us," Haud called to the two guarding Russia.

"What?" One of them questioned, a bit taken back by the request.

"He can stay with his friend if he wishes. If America sees a familiar face when he wakes, it may make everything easier," Haud reasoned, trying to reassure herself and everyone. The last thing they wanted was a repeat of what had happened before. The less panic and chaos, the better everything will be to manage.

Navajo gave Russia a look before reluctantly following Haud's wishes. The two pulled back their spears and Russia slowly walked between them, eyeing Navajo, and followed behind the rest.

The cell they were lead to looked more like a proper holding cell, fit with metal bars and an appropriate door that opened to a bigger cavern with smoothened walls and floors. Chained cuffs were mounted on the walls, three sets evenly spaced out. What looked like claw marks were around them, both on the ground and higher ceiling. What caused them, Russia couldn't guess, and frankly, it disturbed him.

America and Russia were placed in there, America moved off the gurney. Russia was then backed up towards the chains, assuming he would be placed in them. Haud stopped them, saying it wasn't

necessary. The bars can hold back worse than them, there is little they can do to escape.

Again, ominous.

They carried Canada past their cell, placing him in what Russia assumed was another identical cell. He regretted not asking if Kaz could stay with him, just so that they stayed in pairs. He was probably pushing things as is, he didn't want to make too many requests. They were considerably easy for him being a captive. That, or he was over-prepared for worse situations.

No guards were waiting by the locked cell door, the voices of the tribes growing fainter and fainter as they walked away. The silence after a stressful situation, where his attention is still high and he's still analyzing everything around him, was Russia's least favorite time.

Moment from moment with nothing but a racing heart, a head on a swivel, and every sound that could exist placed on a speaker. Seconds were minutes, as minutes were to hours.

Russia paced back and forth, creating and discarding escape plans as he did. He would pause when he heard a sound, ears strained for any other sound before proceeding to pace and think.

What were those claw marks?

What exactly are their chances of getting out?

Did Kaz wait long enough to see if they can regroup or did he already try to make it out on his own? He was terrible at remembering paths, especially if he's only been down it once before, there was no way he could successfully make it past everyone in the tunnels and get out. No. He was still here.

How could he get to Canada and get him out as well? No way he was going to just leave anyone, he would get everyone out first even if it meant getting left behind. America would be so crushed if anything happened to his brother, he wouldn't allow that.

At the thought of him again, Russia paused and looked at America.

His glasses were missing, probably lost in the struggle, the fur on his jacket damp from melted snow and dirtied with half-dried mud, the same mixtures dotting the rest of his clothes. By the scuff on his knees, he had been knocked down prior to everything that had happened, just based on he had landed after Haud put him to sleep.

How had she had done that?

Magic obviously. She had wings, so it wasn't out of the ordinary then. Surprising, yes, but he should have been hinted towards it when he saw her start that fire with nothing. Anyone who has abilities like that almost always has wings. He did think almost just in case there were unknown factors based on the fact if there was, it would be kept well hidden.

Hidden behind sunglasses.

Russia sat down next to the sleeping American and sighed. He had a few questions still floating around his head; how did Haud's wings grow like that, what are they going to do now, when will the two brothers wake up, is Kaz okay, why did they even come this way, what would they have to do to get out safely?

A few possible answers tried to steady his racing thoughts but it did little to help.

The only thing that calmed him down slightly was when he turned to look at America again. He watched his chest steadily rise up and down and without knowing it he had zoned out and only registered America's repetitive movements.

When America turned onto his side, he was broken out of that small trance after an undermined amount of time.

America groaned and mumbled incomprehensible things that actually sounded like Spanish before slowly sitting up. His vision was blurred and his back hurt, which mixed with the soreness he still felt throughout the rest of his body. He didn't realize where he was right away and instead focused on going back to sleep.

When he couldn't find his blanket, however, that's when he cared to

look. He quickly sat up and looked around, seeing the cave, the bare, the chains, and the claw marks.

"America?"

Jumping at the sudden voice, America scrambled to his feet and held out his hands ready to fight whoever spoke. When he saw Russia sitting on the ground he relaxed slightly. He knew this country.

Then he remembered why he wanted to find this country.

"Russia, what the hell!"

Not expecting that, Russia leaned away, taken aback by the tone of his voice. He expected fear maybe, that he would have to comfort him about the situation, try to explain things. Instead, he was eyed with a glare.

"Where have you been, your brother was so worried, *I* have been so worried!"

"America, let me explain," Russia tried to calm him down, raising his hands a little.

"No, you can wait," America shot him down. "I have been trying for *days.* Days to try and get ahold of you. So we can talk about everything that's been happening. But you go and disappear on a fucking adventure into the woods instead!"

"Nyet, America it's not like that, I-"

"Oh, it's exactly like that! God, how could I have been so stupid!" America turned around throwing his hands into the air. Everything he had kept down for the past few days came bubbling out, and he couldn't stop it now.

"I'm such an idiot, I don't even know why I liked you. Why I kept allowing myself to be lead on by someone who clearly doesn't care about me in the slightest. All you do is run away every time anything got too serious. I tried to be patient but," America turned to look at Russia who was now standing and holding back his own

wave of emotions. "You really just are like everyone else."

When America gave a half-hearted laugh, the atmosphere shifted and for a moment he looked as if he had snapped. "No actually, you aren't like everyone else. You know why?"

Russia was silent, watching America with watery eyes.

"I trusted you! I trusted you more than I have trusted anybody in a very long time, my entire life it feels like."

"America that's not fair."

"Well, life ain't fair! I've learned that the hard way! All everyone does is get close to you and then hurt you. All I can rely on is myself."

"I didn't mean to hurt you," Russia finally snapped back, his own voice matching America's in desperation and volume. "I was just scared, I didn't mean for any of this to happen! I do care about you America."

America scoffed and shoved his hands in his pockets, looking at the ground. "Fool me once and fool me twice, Russia."

"America-"

"No, save it! Im tired of hearing you say you love me than have you act like you dont!" America shouted, tears streaming down his cheeks. His heart raced, the air around him seemed thinner and he was trying to resist gasping for breath. He knew if he slowed, he wouldn't be able to get everything out and he needed to. He *deserved* to.

He wiped away his tears, new ones quickly taking their place and he barely even noticed that Russia had begun to silently start crying. "Do you know how much that hurts! To be in your arms, to be cared for, to feel so safe and have that all taken away from you, over and over and over again! I can't keep doing that, I can't keep living like that."

"I'm trying to help you!" Russia shouted, his voice echoing around

them. America jumped, a startled cry leaving his throat. "I only came to this place so I could help you with your eyes! So you could feel safe anywhere you went, instead of hiding behind your glasses! I didn't want you to only feel safe with me!"

"No, you didn't want me around you like that anymore. Instead of telling me to my face like a man, you ran and hide behind some elaborate lie that would keep you from facing the issue."

"That's not true, you have to believe that."

"You know what I am starting to believe, Russia? Im starting to believe that you never liked me more than anything other than an ally, a 'comrade'," America made the motion of air quotes and it sent an ice shard right through Russia's heart. "You never liked me more than that, not once and not ever. You just used me!"

"America, that's not true!"

"Then prove me wrong!"

Russia looked down at America, both of their breathing matched that of someone who just ran a 100-yard dash. His eyes still had tears streaming from them, but his expression was seething with rage. His anger was boiling, he wanted to scream in his defense, save his name and protect himself. This was a high-risk situation, he was trained to handle these. To remain calm. Instead, his hands were sweaty, his face beat red and his mind was traveling a million miles a minute.

In one thoughtless swift lunge, he grabbed America up by his jacket and brought him close.

America recoiled back, thinking he went too far. The Russian country right in front of him looked down at him angry. He expected him to yell, to scream at him, or hit him, punching him something.

Instead, he saw Russia look down for a brief half-second before pushing their lips together.

America's eyes went wide and he was frozen in place. Before he

could do anything, he was abruptly set back down. Russia stumbled backward in shock, a similar expression on his face. He turned his head away in shame, held the back of his hand over his mouth as if to try and wipe what had happened away but couldn't bring himself to do it. He couldn't believe what he just did.

All anger and frustration were suddenly gone. The only thing left was the loud silence between them.

"Im sorry I," Russia fumbled with his words, struggling to say anything. Words half in English and half in Russian were barely managed out before he was able to say, "I wasn't thinking."

He didn't notice America had walked up to him until he felt a hand grab his coat and force him to come eye level with two pairs of hypnotic reflective black eyes.

"You do too much of that," America had the slightest smirk on his lips before he connected them with Russia's. He could feel how tense he was for a second before the bigger country seemed to melt into his touch, kissing back. He wrapped his arms around Russia's neck, pulling him close, deepening their kiss.

Russia, almost scared to touch him–or still in shock about everything–shakingly rested his hands on America's back. Slowly he trailed his hands down, gliding around his hips before lifting America up into his arms.

Slightly surprised, America gripped Russia's shoulders tightly and looked down at the now further away rocky floor. He looked back at Russia, who had kept his gaze locked on his American.

"I love you," Russia said on instinct.

Tears claimed the corners of America's eyes again and he smiled.

"Я люблю тебя. (I love you.)"

He cupped Russia's face in his hands and place his forehead on his. They shut their eyes, holding the other closely in a small moment of embraced peace each one had sought after they held each other this closely last. It felt like that last time was years ago, and they didn't

want to leave each other's arms.

Actually, when a voice that wasn't theirs cleared their throat, they held onto each other tighter in alarm.

Russia turned his body to hold America away from whoever it was and held out his arm as if he held a shield. America narrowed his eyes, and wrapped his arms around Russia, about ready to stab a bitch to stay where he was.

The bitch would have been the cloaked figure standing behind the cell door if Russia didn't relax his stance upon recognizing the outfit and braided purple hair.

Haud had her face painted over and her eyes just barely covered by the shadow of her hood. She saw Russia and America holding onto each other, previously embracing as lovers would, and understood why the boy had been so urgent in staying with her son.

There she stood with her hands held together in front of her, as if she had patiently been waiting for them to finish. She wore a small smile, apparently amused as well. She did have a slight suspicion, and it was confirmed.

Before anything could be said, Haud asked humorously, "Am I interrupting?"

**I felt icky writing that one line where America was "like a man" but it's in character for him, the heat of the moment, yadda yadda, so imma just bleerg ya know.**

**Either way, Cinemasins anyone? The roll credits was a reference to their channel xD**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Reconnction

**Narrator's POV**

"America, if you could follow me, please?" Haud said as she opened the cell door, standing to the side to allow her son to follow.

Of course, America not knowing who she was or even where he was, clung onto Russia tighter. He glared at her, not realizing his glasses were off just yet. Russia held him close as well, but not in the same level of urgency. More so he felt safer.

"Please, it is important."

"Lady I don't even know who you are, and you have us locked up! Where's Canada? My brother, where is he!"

"America calm down," Russia tried to reason with him.

"No, where's my brother! And Kaz!"

Haud sighed, remembering how her son could be so persistent. And it took all of her willpower not to say anything about it, or run to him, brush her hand against his face and pull him close into a tight hug once more. The last time she managed to embrace him in her arms, he was unconscious and she had to leave him in another country's care.

"They are okay, just in their own cells for now. Safe and sound. Russia insisted that he stayed with you."

"Sounds gay," America muttered so only Russia could hear. He rolled his eyes and tried to keep a straight face. Fuck you it was a pun.

"I want to see him, if I see him then maybe I'll go with you."

"America, you don't have a choice."

"Well then you will have to drag me out of here," he said before turning his head to hide it in Russia's neck. His actions may have been childlike, but whatever works to get him away from that woman. He had a bad feeling about her and the whole situation. A few bits of memory from a cave system he was in the year before came back to mind and he had the same feelings then as well. This was bad, then was bad, Russia is safe.

His "safety" patted America's back, holding him close before walking to Haud. She gestured to her son as a silent way of asking for assistance.

"I go where he goes," Russia said, and would have regardless if Haud had asked for help or not.

"Of course," Haud nodded, noticing America peaking at her from the corner of his eyes. "He might listen better with you."

Russia followed Haud down the halls of the cave, trying to remember the layout he already knew and the bits he could remember from last year's 'visit'. And whether he liked it or not, America was doing the same. When he glanced up, he recognized the cave walls and some of the carvings in them and was hit with a memory of running past it in a hurry.

Wherever they were he hoped he could find a way out and get his brother.

Russia didn't recognize how tense America felt until they were both stopped. As they paused, he could tell by how little he had moved. Arms stiffed and legs locked, America was ready to be dragged away from Russia at any time and never see him again.

The whole area, this whole place it hurt. It sent chills down his spine, a pit of dreadful remembrance. He wasn't meant to be here, he had to leave. They all had to leave, this was bad, this was all bad. None of them were supposed to be here.

"I'll have to let the others know America refused to leave you, stay right here," Haud said before pushing back an animal skin cloth and entering the room behind it.

Russia rubbed America's back, swaying slightly in hopes that would calm him down. He was too deep in worry for something like that to work, or for him to even notice.

After a minute of discussion, Haud moved the makeshift door to let Russia and America through.

Inside was a room America recognized, though he couldn't fully explain why. It was a bigger room, cloaked figures sitting in a half-circle looking at the two. In the center was what looked to be a dying fire, smoke rising from the glowing embers and going into a carved-out hole in the ceiling. Some form of a ventilation system he guessed.

But the people. The woman who lead them here, her voice it was. . . familiar. He had heard it before, and this room. Everything about it, he has seen it before. He ran away, why did he run. No, if he ran away before he should probably run again.

"Russia, we need to go," America whispered to the country who held him.

"I think we should give them a chance, America," Russia said, a bit louder to let the others know he is still not a threat and is trying to help them. He was the only reason America even made it this far, after all.

"A chance to what? Attack us? Who are you guys anyway?" America raised his voice and looked at the cloaked figures, glaring and hoping he could use rage to get over the fear. "And don't answer in some fucking riddle either!"

"Language, boy!" A male in a cloak scolded.

"It's English, mystery man!" America yelled back without thinking.

"America, please," Haud said before anyone else could. She watched as her son looked at her with anger in his eyes then look away with a hint of shame. She recognized that look, it was what he would do a lot whenever he got in trouble when he was younger.

"Please, sit," she gestured towards Russia and he did as he was

asked, holding America in his lap.

"The last time you were here, things did not go as planned."

"The last time?" America asked, his feeling of familiarity with this place suddenly becoming more unnerving with its confirmation.

"Yes, the last time. It was too dangerous to reach out so soon, but when you came here I thought it was a sign. That you were ready," Haud looked at the other cloaked tribes, sensing their stares. "I was wrong."

"Ready for what? Are you gonna tell me I'm some long-lost heir to some underground cult thingy? Cause if I am, I gladly refuse," America tried to stand to leave but Russia pulled him back down.

"America please, just listen," he pleaded.

He didn't resist and instead just let out a dramatic sigh to show his discontent.

"Thank you, Russia."

"Hold on, do you two know each other or something?" America interrupted again, looking at Haud and Russia. The two had listened to each other willingly and without much conflict.

"Yes, he came here again looking for answers for you."

"Again?"

"He's tried to find us a few times but we stayed hidden, keeping our distance."

"Why?"

Haud's lip twitched downward for a moment. "It. . . wasn't the right time."

"You said that already."

"Yes, but now I believe it might be. It might *have* to be," Haud

pulled out a woven basket and removed the top from it. Inside was some class bottles and what looked like wrapped herbs, but America couldn't see it too well from where he was seated.

"What do you remember?"

"Like from here? Uhh, I don't know, nothing but a bad feeling."

"No, America, from your life."

"My life?" America blinked at the request. Most don't ask about that, 'cause when you've lived as long as he had did, the start of one life usually meant the end of another. It's never really like a happy thing to bring up.

"I remember waking up and my dad being there, ya'know UK? It's not the clearest, but I remember it was cause I was shot by The German Empire. That's what my dad told me."

"Is that really your earliest memory though?" A different cloaked figure asked. Her voice was old and brittle and her stature was more leaned over and sort of squished.

"N-no."

"Really?" Russia didn't mean to ask out loud.

"Yeah, I remember a lot before that," America looked up at the puzzled Russian. There was still a lot he hasn't told him, a sentence they both could say. "A lot of things and events I know I wasn't there for. They are blurry and scattered and kind of, like, faint ya' know? But that's something that can happen, anyone can possibly have memories from past lives, it's just not common."

"Not anyone," Haud corrected. She reached into her basket and pulled out a small wooden box. It had crude carvings, was messy, and was clearly not made by someone familiar with the practice. "Someone who has a better connection to magic can definitely find ways to remember, and quite possibly even fully bring a country back."

America looked at the box in confusion, expecting the disguised

women to open it. She didn't, instead passed it to the person to her right. As the box made its way down the half-circle of tribes, Haud continued.

"That's why you could remember, and still can from lives you shouldn't. When you were younger, you were very accident-prone and very reckless."

Not much has changed then huh.

When the box was passed to America, he was almost scared to take it. He recognized it, he knew he did and he didn't know why. Despite his worries, and the fact he didn't seem to have a choice, America took the box and held it in his hands. It was old, really old, but kept in decent condition. The colors on the carved scenes had faded and some bits of wood were even dented and chipped. In the front was a weird metal-looking lock. It wasn't a simple key, it had buttons and what looked like small levers, all jumbled together into a mess.

"What is this?" America asked looking up at Haud, to anyone who would answer.

"You should know boy," a cloaked man reached out and pointed to the backside of the box. As America turned it around to look where he pointed, he finished, "it's yours."

Carved out unevenly was his name.

Confused, he brushed his fingers over the carved word and frantically looked over the box as if it had answers written on it as well. Whatever answers they were he would take them at this point.

"I-I, I don't understand."

"You were a very inventive kid," Haud smiled looking more into the basket. She had kept almost anything she could that her son had made for her. His first carving, his first spear, the beadwork he did, his bow. Of course, all of those couldn't fit into one small basket, so she brought the smaller things. But the box. That should be enough to prove to everyone and America.

"You made the lock and combination in such a manner so only you could unlock it."

"What is in it?" Russia asked looking over America to see the box.

"Just some like notes and stuff," America waved the question away, handing Russia the box to look at. When he took it, he was asked, "how do you know that?"

". . . I. I don't know," he looked up at Haud for an answer. He was nervous, but there were no obvious signs that they were in some dangerous waters yet.

"This happens a lot yes? You knowing something you can't explain? Remembering how to do certain things you were never taught?"

Russia handed America the box back, not bothering to try to do the lock. The smaller country held what was supposedly his, and he wanted to just deny it and run again.

"Well yeah, but that's because I'm forgetful. I have the memory span of a goldfish, I can barely remember what I ate for breakfast, and- and I don't exactly remember being taught how to walk, but I can still do it."

"Because you consistently do that since the day you were taught. These instances I'm talking about are random, and sometimes you don't remember how you did it. A certain hunting skill, a war tactic, the urgency you feel when covering your eyes."

Having them being suddenly pointed out, America quickly pulled his jacket hood up and tried to hide his eyes by using the fur and his hair.

"That's because black eyes are bad, they are demonic. And. And my dad had them when he went all power-hungry."

"Yes, your father tapped into darker magic that poisoned him, and no doubt did his curse make him pay. But it was clear he had brought that onto himself," Haud paused and looked at her hand for a moment. "Your father is a child of a unification, yes?"

"Yeah?"

"He has much unchecked magic, no doubt he hasn't received many teachings in how to control it. Some part of him must have known what he was doing was wrong and that feeling must have channeled itself into his own curse."

"Wait, but I don't have magic, I couldn't have cursed myself."

"Not enough to do that, no," Haud frowned and her hands shook slightly. "But we do."

America sharply inhaled, tensing up. He got ready to jump up and run but he felt Russia wrap his arms around him in a restraining hug. He wasn't allowed to leave, and Russia wouldn't help him.

"That's why we must ask you, America," the older woman gave Haud a chance to compose herself. "When you came to the land you call yours, how did you survive?"

"Well, I just made a shelter and learned how to live off the land," America answered confidently. "I had to, I was left no other choice."

"How did you make the shelter?"

"What?"

"You were a young child yes?"

"Well, I guess, yeah, I can't remember exactly how young I was. I just know I was young, that's how it was back then."

"So how did you make a shelter? Hunt? Cook? Had you done all of these before?"

"Well, I can't remember, maybe? I mean, I must have in order to be able to do that!" America looked angry at the others, more out of desperation than actual rage. "Why do you all even care? You weren't there!"

"We where, America," a man corrected. "We taught you those things, we helped you survive."

"No," his voice lowered almost to a growl. "I was by myself, the only people there tried to kill me as soon as they saw me."

"No, America, that's what you told yourself," another cloaked figure chimed in.

"No, no that's how it was, I was just trying to survive, but there were others and they attacked me, they were savages!"

"You attacked us first! We didn't give you all that you wanted, so you attacked us. You stole what you wanted instead!"

"Everyone stop it!"

A pillar of flames rose from the coals, the intense light and heat startling everyone. America had jumped, almost dropping the box in his lap, and accidentally hit Russia in the jaw with his head.

The fire, just as quickly as it grew, was put back out and reduced to the few flames it started as. Haud, the only one who hadn't reacted to it, held her first curled and a faint glow was coming from her hidden eyes.

The glow lit up her eyes just enough for America to see them. To almost recognize them.

"We are not here to argue. We are here, to tell the truth," she said in the calmest voice she could manage. She knew that everyone had a right to be angry with her son, what he had done was horrible, but that was lifetimes ago. He wasn't the same as the one who had done that. She was sure of it.

"America, when you were left on the shores of what you call home, you were too young to survive on your own. Maybe things were different where you came from, but to us, you were too young and too unequipped to live by yourself."

Trying not to interrupt, Russia held his jaw shut as he rubbed where America had hit him. He hadn't even had noticed, either, a reasonable thing considering Haud decided to play with fire very close to his face.

"We helped you the best we could, taught you how to survive out here. You had never seen most of the plants or animals that lived there, you wouldn't have known what to do without us."

America wanted to object but found he couldn't even form the words to any argument. Instead, he looked at the box he held in his lap. Nervously he started to fidget with one of the levers.

"We took you in, we raised you and taught you everything we could. You were so happy there, with us. We were a family."

"I have a family," America tried to argue but any points he thought to make left him. Instead, he looked back down, examining the lock.

"And you always will. No matter which life you lived," Haud looked at the box in his lap. "If you don't believe us, then open it."

Did he really want to find out? If he had made this box, if what they were saying was true, then what? What does that mean for him?

A deep part of him resisted, telling him no. No, this can only bring something bad. But he was already in a bad place, a secret cult would be normal at this point.

Russia rested his hand on his shoulder, half whispering in his ear, "if you don't want to you don't have to."

"I don't know what I want," America said, looking up at who he assumed he could call boyfriend now. They should clarify later when they get the chance, but for now, Russia has that title in his head. He just needed something he knew was good in this whole situation.

Looking at everyone around the room, their aura of familiarity, especially the woman who seemed to be the leader of everything. Her eyes. Something about them, that glow. He knew it from somewhere, he had to.

Momentarily confused on how the lock even worked, America fiddled with it for a moment. Haud had hoped it would be

instantaneous, meaning that her son was still able to remember as well as she hoped. It was a high hope, she knew, but one she couldn't stop herself from having.

"I-I, what the hell is any of this?" America picked up the box to look closer at it. "Can't I just break it open?"

"Already tried," a man dismissed his request. "You wanted it to be unbreakable, something only you could open."

"Jesus, what the hell was I trying to hide then," he muttered to himself, shaking the box and hearing something inside. It was multiple objects, he could tell by instinct and by the sound.

One of the cloaked figures that sat next to Haud leaned towards her, and said, "I told you this wouldn't work, he made that when he was a child, it should be easy. And he's not capable of doing it."

America narrowed his eyes and scowled, setting the box down in his lap with the lock facing up.

"Hey, only I get to say what I can and can not do," he growled as he then quickly pulled out the pins and flipped the small levers. A fucking child, was he calling him stupid?

The lock clicked and the top cracked open.

"Ha!" America smiled, holding up the box at the cloaked figure defiantly. "How's that for capable."

The cloaked man smiled and crossed his arms, nudging his head towards the open box. "I knew you could do it."

Confused, he looked at the box and the opened lock, then back to the man. Ooooh, he sees what he did there. Bastard man.

"Did I really make this as a child?" America asked, slowly opening the box. He looked up at the others, nervous to even look at whatever was in the thing.

"Not really," the same man answered. "You were a bit older. I just said that to motivate you."

Russia chuckled lightly. Such an American thing to do, doing exactly what you were told you couldn't do.

Inside the box wasn't anything too special, not at first glance at least. There were some letters, the handwriting looking rushed while parts weren't even in English. There was a beaded pendulum with a white star in the center and red and blue patterns around it, part of what was once a necklace but the cord was broken. A few rocks and shells, some broken, mixed in with a few loose beads and a brittle doll made out of husk and wearing old faded fabric for a shirt and pants.

Seeing the doll, he picked it up slowly, scared to hold it too hard. The tan husk crackled as it moved, being almost paper-thin and dried out. The head was lumpy, and it had no face, a standard thing when it came to dolls like this.

How did he know that? Well, by remembering of course, but how did he?

That wasn't all he recalled. He remembered trying to bend the corn husks when they were slightly damp into the shape of a person. He had ripped two before getting the hang of it, making little dolls for almost everyone. But he kept this one, the first one he didn't break while making it.

His mother taught him.

Not France, no, his other mother. His first mother. He. He had a mother before France?

America sifted through the box, his eyes darting between objects as faint memories became more clear and rushed to his head. The letters he wrote to his father, other countries and tribes that never got sent, the shells he had collected to carve beads from, all of it were things he never realized he had forgotten about.

He had a whole life, some of it tucked away into this box so he could remember. America knew he must've, after how long he's lived and how many times he has died. But to be faced with it, to remember it all. He didn't know what to do.

"America? Are you okay?"

The said country looked up to Haud, his eyes filling with tears. He looked down at the box, his vision blurring, and his breathing elevating.

"I don't know, I can't," he stumbled over his words, looking desperately at the woman. "Who are you?"

Haud swallowed back any doubts she had as she lifted her hands to her hood rim and pulled it down. She used a spare cloth in front of her to wipe off the paint that covered her flag but paused with the fabric in front of her face.

"I'm sorry we had to meet like this again," she said, slowly lowering the cloth and holding back her tears. She tried her best to smile with quivering lips and shakey hands.

"My son."

With widened eyes, America sat there staring at her frozen. His tears freely fell from his eyes, his mouth agape. Everything became clearer and sharper, from the worry lines around her eyes, the loose braids that had a few stray strands, to the hidden glint of the little metal pendants on her collar. The cave walls expanded and deepened, everything that wasn't Haud was blurred into the shadows cast by the small fire, pushed out of his sight.

For a moment, nothing else mattered.

America jumped up, ran through the burning embers, and lunged at Haud.

"America, wait!" Russia reacted, throwing out his arms to grab him but missed while the others had moved to grab their weapons. He was barely on his feet when everyone had something from a spear to a blade pointed at America and Haud.

"I'm so sorry!"

Loud sobbing made everyone stand down as they realized America had crumbled into Haud's chest, holding onto her in a tight hug. He

desperately grabbed at her cloak, trying to hold her tighter and praying that she wouldn't just disappear.

Haud was finally able to hug her son again. She shook, praying just the same, smiling, and crying, and muttering words of comfort in her family's languages. She ran her hand through her son's hair, before resting her head on top of his.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I-I am so so sorry," he repeated, gradually losing his words in his crying as he gasped for air. His throat, already sore from earlier started to hurt again, forcing his voice to become raspier and choppy until there was no sound. Only him mouthing words in an almost pathetic attempt to keep doing all he knew to do at the moment.

"Shhhhh, it's okay son," Haud whispered, her voice quivering. "You're home now. It's okay."

She looked up and saw Russia standing a little ways away from everyone, looking conflicted. He wanted to help America, hearing him crying hurt him, but he knew he shouldn't invade their space. They both needed this, he could tell. Losing a parent was hard, but he could never imagine losing one and forgetting all about it.

"You brought my son back to me," Haud said, getting Russia's attention. "Thank you."

Russia nodded silently, unsure how to respond. Can't really say 'no problem' seeing how it was one, and for some reason, a simple 'you're welcome' didn't come to mind. Not like he had time to say anything after that. He was swiftly grabbed and pulled by now not hooded tribes into a tight hug. Russia was squished up against America, surrounded by tribes, all with their paint washed off to reveal their flags. Seeing no other option, the Russian had no choice but to give in to the group hug.

Even if things were no longer hostile, they weren't fully in the clear. To appease to how America's mind now works they only reminisce on the good memories. They told stories of how much of a little shit he was sometimes, playing pranks and being too smart and too careless for his own good.

America didn't fully remember most of what they said, but he knew himself enough to know it was in full character for him to 'accidentally' set off a few explosions. He had apparently defended himself by saying he didn't know lighting gunpowder on fire did that.

He did. He fucking did.

America insisted that Russia stayed by him and his mom, something that he didn't mind but found it funny that he was still left with little choice. Of course, though, Russia would make America almost regret it by him deciding to tell his own stories about America. The tribes loved to hear about how the dumbass thought it would be a good idea to throw flour around the whole kitchen while baking, attempt to play with dangerous chemicals, and inevitably fail in trying to pick a fight with Russia.

"I let you win," America dismissed with a huff, crossing his arms.

"Uh-huh, sure," Russia teased by flicking him on the side of the head.

"America has chosen a proper partner," the elder woman, whose name was Hopi, don a flag with vertical stripes of turquoise, white, and yellow with a design in the middle of the white. She smiled at how her comment had the two boys caught off guard. "He is a very skilled fighter and knows to listen."

"Something America could stand to learn," Navajo mumbled to himself, getting a little swat on his arm by Haud.

"Okay, we haven't made anything really official, we still have to talk about that whole 'partner' thing," America ignored the last bit about him not listening, maybe proving their point but oh well.

"You don't have to be worried about commitment," Hopi said, poking the embers with a stick. "If you don't take him, he would have many others waiting."

"No, no, he's mine, I'm not worried about that, it's him I gotta wait for."

"Oh, it's him that's uncertain?"

Russia hesitated to say something, not wanting to say the wrong thing in front of America's long-lost family. He opened his mouth to confirm that he was with America but stopped himself when he saw Hopi's eyes meet his own. She looked between him and America for a second before saying to Russia, "you can do better."

Russia snorted and America gasped, clearly insulted, and set his hand on his chest. "Ow!"

"Hopi, be nice!" Haud scolded but still smiled regardless, holding back her own laughs. The others didn't feel the need to and instead openly laughed.

"If the truth isn't nice, that's not my fault."

"Well then lie," America protested. "Tell him like, I'm amazing or just the best country ever."

"America, I saw you trip *up* our stairs, I don't think you can recover in my mind from that," Russia smirked, seeing America look up at him with a pouting frown.

"Okay, but, still."

"Tripping up the stairs isn't so bad. Remember when he jumped from that tree thinking he could fly?" A tribed named Sioux added laughing. He had a missing tooth, something he claims America was actually to blame, and was a noticeable feature that matched how he acted. "He made wings for it too."

"I seem to remember someone helping him with that," Haud crossed her arms and raised a brow. She very well remembered having to help heal a broken bone in her son's arm, right after she punched Sioux in the face.

"The kid had a good idea," he tried to defend himself, holding up his hands in defense. "I wasn't going to squash his dreams, plus seeing him fall was hilarious."

"Damn it, I can't even remember that, that would have been

amazing!" America laughed with Sioux, which saved him from Haud's wrath. "Guess I gotta try again."

"America, no."

"America, nyet."

America looked between Haud and Russia, the two that spoke at the same time. "Fiiiiiiiiine," he slumped back, silently planning to do it anyway. South would be down, and he would be ready to film it too.

"If you wanted to fly and fall I could just as Kaz to drop you out of the sky again," Russia joked, resting his elbow on his head.

"This sounds equally as stupid I'm in!"

"Still as reckless as ever," Sioux smiled. "Nice."

"Please don't encourage him again," Haud sighed.

"Rather it be me then Confed, right," America laughed to himself for a second before suddenly stopping, pausing in place as what he said tried to load in his head. Everyone else, apart from Russia, had frozen holding their breaths, watching America closely for what he might say or do next.

Russia noticed the mood suddenly shift, everyone, even Haud, staring with terrified wide eyes at America.

"Who's Confed?" He asked, looking to everyone hoping to meet their eyes. No one dared take their attention away from a possible threat. When he saw that everyone had their hands on their chosen weapons again, his eyes widened and he held back his rising panic.

"Uh. He's," America blinked rapidly as he tried to think. His thoughts turned fuzzy and he couldn't concentrate on any of them, unable to tell what any of them could even be.

"I can't," he tried to focus harder, narrowing his eyes and rubbing his forehead. "I can't, no, it's."

"America, stop."

"Why can't I remember? I can almost, it's just."

"America, son, no," Haud placed her hand on his arm. He flinched, jumping away from her touch and falling into Russia. He quickly scrambled off of him and tried to crawl backward away from everybody. The cave wall wasn't that far back, and he noticed it quickly when he saw he was still in kicking distance from everybody.

"America, what's wrong," Russia tried to lower himself and softened his voice, preparing himself for a possible episode. He leaned forward slowly, trying to reach out for his hand. "What's going on, what do you see?"

"No, stay back!" America yelled, kicking at Russia, then at Haud when he saw she was close. The moment he focused enough to recognize her face, he inhaled sharply. Her eyes, they glowed brightly with power. Her skin was bruised and she was bleeding from her head. The wind blew her loose hair around as her wings created more of it. She had hateful intent in her eyes, he knew he had gone too far with her and had underestimated her strengths.

He had to run.

"No!" America shouted, grabbing his head and pulling his hair, ripping some strands out. He shut his eyes and tried to force the memory away, to forget such a disgraceful event. "No, no, no! Get out, get out!"

Everyone had stood at that point, Navajo trying to keep everyone away so that they didn't crowd America or get themselves hurt. It could just be a flashback and the faces of tribes with spears and knives around him would only make it worse.

"America, please listen to me," Haud quickly kneeled down in front of him and grabbed his arms. She pulled them, trying to pry them away from his face but he was fighting back. He was shaking from the effort, clenching his jaw shut with tears streaming down his cheeks.

"He:awak (My son)!"

America opened his pitch-black eyes and screamed, "I said get out!"

He ripped his arm free from Haud's hold and grabbed her by the neck. As soon as he did that, Navajo grabbed America's arm and tried to pry his hand away. He stared at Haud, with a calmed angry expression. His narrowed eyes, and unwavering grasp, it was like nothing Russia had ever seen him do. He was frozen in place, he wasn't even aware of Navajo yelling for help or multiple tribes running past him. He saw how his fingers dug into Haud's throat, squeezing as hard as he could, her hold on his one arm getting weaker.

He broke himself free of the trance he was in and almost lunged at America to pin him down. He grabbed his arm, allowing Haud to use both her hands to try and free herself, and pulled it behind his back. He twisted his arm enough to make it hurt, to which America yelled, but he let go of his chokehold. Quickly, Russia grabbed his other arm and held them both behind his back, pulling him down onto the ground with him, allowing him to wrap his legs around his, using his own body as a form of restraints.

Navajo pulled Haud away from America as she was gasping for breath. The sharp pain she got from each breath told her to steady her breathing but the sudden attack only made her breathe more heavily.

The tribes that weren't trying to help Haud or weren't almost paralyzed with fear tried to help restrain America as he was screaming and thrashing around, but Russia warned them to stay back. He didn't want him to get his hands on anybody else and possibly do worse damage. Instead, they stood, pointing their weapons at him in case he broke free. They didn't want to, but if they needed to they would have to attack him to make sure he didn't hurt anyone else in the state he was in.

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you for what you did!" America screamed, his tears slowly turning to black.

Haud saw this and her eyes widened. "Së:dah (Sleep)," she managed

out, waving her hand.

America slumped over, going limp in Russia's hold. He released his death grip on him and sat up, holding him in his arms. His mouth was agape, a black liquid starting to leak from the corners of his mouth, similar in color and consistency to the black tears that slowly dripped down his cheeks. Russia turned America's head to the side so the liquid dripped out onto the floor instead of building up in his throat and making him choke.

"We can't be too late, can we?"

"Too late for what!?" Russia yelled louder than he expected of himself. The tribed that had spoken, lowered her head, turning to Hopi, and didn't respond.

"No, no, we cant be. He's just," Haud didn't know what to do, holding her throat and looking towards the country she had almost given her life to protect. "We can't be, we are so close. He can see us now, we can't be too late."

"What's going on?" Russia lowered his voice and narrowed his eyes at Haud. He knew he shouldn't speak to someone he needed answers from in such a deathly tone, but he didn't care.

"America's past is littered with dark spots, but he can't keep trying to forget. It doesn't work that way, he only hurts himself," Hopi tried to explain, her arms wrapped around the younger tribe as she cried into her shoulder.

"Hë:h hë’ëh, (no)" Haud's voice trembled as ice shot through her veins, her widened eyes watching the black liquid pool from his mouth and closed eyes.

"He's breaking."

**It's been like five months. I have no legal excuse. But plenty of illegal ones, just don't tell anybody.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Misconception

**Surprise! This one is close to 15,000 words so happy reading lmao.**

**Britain's POV**

"Okay. Call me if you find anything else."

I hung up the phone, turning to the book of contacts I had sat beside me. The list was getting shorter and there was still no sign of where America could have run off to.

My son should know it is way too dangerous for him to be gone for this long. I knew he didn't like it but it was a matter of keeping him safe. The last time this was known publically, it wasn't handled well at all. Unfortunately, I was included in that as well.

Frustrated, I sighed and took off my monocle, rubbing my eyes. America could have gone to Russia's per Australia's suggestion, but they appeared to have been in a little spat, so that's uncertain. Wouldn't have mattered much, I don't have their house number or any other line to them. New Zealand does, however, and has been trying to call since we have. I would have to show up in person, but doing that would alert them that something was wrong.

Something was, but I couldn't let others know that.

A small rap at the office door behind me called my attention. I turned to look who it was and saw France standing there. She held her phone in her hand and as she walked toward me I hoped she would hand it to me and on the phone would be Canada, or America, or someone who was with them. Instead, she put it in her pocket and I knew she hadn't found anything.

"There was no answer, mon amour (my love)," she said in a lower tone, choosing to look at the hardwood floor instead of me. I nodded and turned back to my list of contacts.

"Did NATO answer?"

"No."

"What about Germany, or Poland?"

"They didn't know where he could be either."

"How about Netherlands? Mexico?"

"No one knows anything."

"Perhaps we should try EU or UN. They may be able to give us a number or help," I suggested, flipping through the pages and trying to find their numbers.

"What would we tell them? If UN knows we can't keep America safe, he said he'll have to do it himself."

I stopped on the page where I had written UN's direct number on. They had suggested without malice, we were both aware, but they told us that he would have to make sure America was secured and wouldn't hurt himself or anyone else. Which would mean locking him up in what was described as a padded cell. If he had problems with just staying at home, he would have more of them being in containment.

As bad as that sounded, with how his episodes have been getting it may have to be the option they may have to put on the table. But they would have to have America's permission for it, Britain had insisted on it. When they find him, depending on how they do, they will have to inform him of this option.

"We have to be prepared to do what we must to keep them safe," I said, picking up the phone and starting to dial UN's number. "If this is a glance into what Canada will start to experience as well, what we do now may decide what happens to both of them."

"Dad! Mom!"

I paused, looking back towards the open office door, and saw New Zealand running in. He caught himself on the door frame, abruptly

stopping and trying to catch his breath.

I nearly slammed the phone back onto the receiver and asked, "what is it? Do you know where they went?"

"Actually, Belarus is at the door. She said Kaz didn't come back home yesterday, either. And she can't get ahold of him."

"Canada was supposed to be with him," France looked over at me with worried eyes. "Nothings happened to him right?"

"Everything will be fine," I reassured her, resting my hand on her shoulder. If he had to, Canada can be an excellent fighter. He wasn't alone either and was in his element.

New Zealand lead us downstairs to the sitting room where he had left his friend Belarus. Now, Belarus, I had no quarrel with her and a few of her other adopted siblings. She was bigger in stature and no doubt shared the same strength as her eldest brother, just without the same level of intimidation. She was much more sociable.

"I don't know where he went, I think he went to try and find my brother Russia," she said, brushing the side of her scarf that wrapped around her head loosely to cover half of her face. "He was supposed to be on a hunting trip and he hasn't been back in a few days."

"Aussie said he was going to help Kaz find him," New Zealand said, looking at me and France worried. "America must've snuck past Aussie to go with him, or at least followed them."

"Where would they have gone?" I turned to our guest, thinking of what our next step could be.

"Canada's truck is still at our house, so I assume they went into the woods around our house," Belarus answered, standing up, becoming almost eye level with me. "There might still be tracks, it hasn't snowed again yet."

"Good." I turned to New Zealand and requested, "fetch your brother, we're going to need him to track them."

He nodded and quickly left to go get Australia. I explained to France that the boys and I would go to the northern woods on their land and will try to find them. When asked if she wanted to come along, she said she should stay here in case someone came here. Whether it be the two or someone who knew something.

We got what we needed and Belarus provided us the ride there, telling us anything that might help. I had my faith in Australia to keep us away from any dangerous animals, even if he isn't as knowledgable in the winter terrain as he is in the warmer ones. New Zealand had asked if she wanted to come to help us but she followed what France had done as well. She would have if her sister Ukraine was not away visiting a friend.

In truth, she didn't seem as worried as we were. Of course, her missing brothers didn't have the same issues as my sons and were more experienced in these woods.

Belarus lead us to where she found the tracks, the snow crunching underfoot. It was shallow, the snow has melted since they were made.

Australia looked at them and walked ahead a little, shivering despite wearing a big winter jacket with proper attire. We can't be out here that long, at least those two. They are used to warmer climates, I can last a bit longer.

We headed out following the tracks, staying close together and barely speaking. We didn't know if there was something or someone out here responsible for the missing boys, so silence was the unanimous choice. Alerting the local wildlife was another reason. I've seen the wolves around this area, and I would rather not see them again.

I pray my boys haven't run into any danger.

**Narrator's POV**

America was still asleep since Haud had put the spell on him, which had been the day before. She panicked when she had cast it so she wasn't worried when he didn't wake up after an hour or so. It was a

temporary spell but the urgency she felt, may have made it last longer.

After the incident, Russia didn't want to leave him. He didn't understand what was happening, and he couldn't get any answers. Not ones that helped. He asked, borderline pleading, for more information after hearing what Haud had said.

"He's breaking."

There was no sign of cracks no hints he was in visible pain, nothing that would mean that. Russia had taken off America's jacket to check and didn't see anything on his arms, back, or chest. The breaking mustn't have been the physical collapsing he knew.

All Haud had said was that they needed to be more careful. They have to be wary of how he acts now, and watch what he says. But when he wakes up and has some time to comprehend everything, they have to tell him something important.

Whatever it was, they didn't tell Russia. If he needed to know, America would tell him. It wasn't up to them to say.

They would however let Canada and Kaz free from their cells. They weren't allowed to leave the village grounds, and that was something they could deal with. It would have been better than the tiny cave rooms.

They gave America a place to sleep, Russia only leaving him for a second to talk to the others. Canada and Kaz were relieved when they understood that they weren't in danger and complied with what the native tribes had said.

Canada had asked about America, to which Haud told him he can see him if he needs to, but he was put to sleep for everyone's safety.

The wording of how she had said that freaked Canada out for a moment, but Russia clarified that she meant actual sleep, not death.

He was told he had to speak with others, too, after he saw his brother. Canada looked nervous to do so, his hand hovering above the eye patch he had worn. Still, he nodded and followed with what

they had requested.

Russia filled in what it probably was with context clues, and focused on his own brother. Kaz was okay, with no bad scratches or anything.

"Біз әлі де кодты ұстанамыз ба? (Do we still follow the code?)" He whispered as Russia was checking him over for wounds.

"иә (yes)," he whispered back. "Бұл адамдар қорқады, кез келген нәрсе болады және олар бізге қарсы шығады. (These people are skittish, anything happens and they will turn on us.)"

Kazakhstan looked at the armed guards that watched them with cold stares. They sent a shiver down his spine, and he swallowed down his fear.

He went with Kaz when they went to the camp outside the caves to help him understand what he can and can not do. The borders were easy to see, so he wasn't worried about him accidentally stepping outside them. It did seem unlikely that a simple misstep would set everything off, but just in case treat it as if it could.

After a while Kaz was fine, showing off his wings proudly and making them glow brightly. That brought out a lot of kids and a few older tribes, and when some of them revealed their own wings to show he was ecstatic. He became fascinated with the different shapes and colors of the wings, and how they were able to hide them so well. They took his quizzical nature well and started to try to show him tricks winged folk had learned.

Kaz would be fine on his own.

After a little while, Russia went back into the caves and tested his memory by walking back to where America was. He noticed he was being followed the moment he had reentered the caves, not that the two armed tribes tried to hide it.

When he found America again, he was still asleep and would stay that way until Russia got tired, too. It was by nightfall when Haud had come to look for him. He told him that Canada and Kaz would

have to sleep in one of the cells for the night, and if Russia wanted he could stay with them. He asked to stay with America, knowing his brother would be able to keep Canada safe. And it would be just for the night.

Haud let him do as he wished, letting him know that for security reasons there will have to be guards outside the room. Russia understood and after a while laid down on the blanketed floor next to America. He looked at his sleeping figure, his chest rising and falling with each deep breath. He had stretched the color of his shirt a little in his haste to check for cracks on his skin, something he only noticed then.

He'd apologize in the morning.

A few hours later, America started to slowly wake up. Once he came to, his first instinct was to look around him and see what was happening. He noticed his shoes were off along with his jacket, put away to the side of him. Still in a cave, more comfortable this time with blankets and pillows on the floor. And still, his favorite Russian next to him.

He looked at Russia, his ushanka off to show his poofy white hair sprawled around him and covering his eyes. He had his hand resting intertwined with America's, which momentarily distracted him from his other senses. He was so cute.

Cute or not, he needed his ass awake.

"Russia," America whispered, nudging his shoulder a little. He stirred a little but woke after America nudged him a little harder.

"Yeah?" He rubbed his eyes with a low yawn.

"One,"-America held up their interlocked hands-" gay. Two, what the hell happened?"

Russia ignored the first thing he said, trying not to blush out of embarrassment. "You had an episode I think, and tried to attack everybody so Haud made you fall asleep with a spell."

"Lovely," America sighed and let go of Russia's hand only so he can

move closer and lay his head on his chest. He felt Russia rub his back, trying to comfort him the best he could. "What about Canada and Kaz? Are they okay?"

"Yeah, they are okay." He paused before slowly asking, "Do you remember all that happened before that?"

"Kind of. It starts to get fuzzy right before I guess I had the episode. We were just laughing and having fun than I just. I don't know, I guess I remembered something bad, I just have a bad feeling about it."

Russia nodded, staying silent knowing America would fill it if he needed to.

"I know it scared me," America continued, closing his eyes. "And I know there are a lot of bad memories I hide and try to forget, and- and sometimes it works but. But some of the basic shit is still there, like the bad feelings I can't explain, just a sense I've done something before and it ended badly. I don't do it on purpose, I can't even control it, it's just something I have to do and I've done it for so long that's all I know to do."

"It's okay, I understand," Russia said brushing his hand through America's messy hair. "You run from things, it's a basic defense, you don't have to feel bad for it. It's called fight or flight for a reason."

Russia lifted America's chin so he would look up at him, cupping his face. He noticed the tears in the corners of his eyes, his almost blackened irises faintly noticeable.

"You are doing all you can to keep yourself safe, and you have done the best job you could have given your circumstances. Survival is hard, I'm proud of you," Russia said in his kindest voice, smiling softly. When tears started to well up in America's eyes and fall down his cheeks, he thought he had said the wrong thing. It was when he jumped up to hug him tightly, burying his hand in his neck did he realize that no he said the right thing.

He held America close to him, allowing him to cry on his shoulder. He wrapped his shirt around his curled fists, trying and failing to

keep himself together. Talking about the bad stuff, he was able to keep himself from crying better but as soon as Russia said that, he just broke.

"God damn it, I'm a little bitch," America joked, his voice really weak. He sniffed, pulling himself away and trying to wipe away his tears. "All it takes is that for me to break down? God, talk about daddy issues, huh?"

"We can ease into that, all of this actually," Russia smiled, ruffling America's hair. "Just so you don't hurt yourself."

"Dang, no hurting myself? Taking away my weekend."

Russia laughed, knowing he was just joking. "If I'm not allowed to, then neither are you, it's only fair."

"Fiiiiiiiiine," America dramatically leaned against Russia, slowly "falling" to rest his head in his lap. "Guess I have to be fair or whatever."

He looked up to see Russia rolling his eyes, their color different from when he had seen them yesterday. It's a bit cooler in here.

"Yes I know, it's so hard to be fair," he teased in a mocking tone.

"Not as hard as it is to admit you're gay, huh?"

"Hey, now."

"Just saying, you're here, you're queer, get used to it."

America poked Russia's forehead, a smug smile plastered on his face. He watched as his cheeks flushed a red, and averted eye contact. He looked embarrassed, obviously, but not the happy flirty kind.

"Hey, you okay? I didn't cross a line did I?" America asked, sitting up and turning to face him.

"No, you're fine, you didn't do anything, it's, well," Russia brushed his hair back with his hand, it falling right back into his eyes. "I

don't know if I'm ready to, I guess say it? It's not that I don't want to be with you, I do, I really do," he grabbed ahold of America's hand, holding it between his own, "I just. . . not ready for others to know yet."

America nodded, understanding even if he explained it a little scattered-brained. "You're scared of the homophobia, I get it, especially since some of your allies are kind of homophobic. You're not ready to come out."

"Yeah, that," Russia sighed and looked down at his hold on America's hands. "This is all new to me, I. It's one thing accepting other people, but me?"

"That's called internalized homophobia, my guy. It sucks ass, but I get it if you don't want to actually say anything to anyone."

"Did you still, uh," Russia swallowed the lump in his throat and tried to stay calm. He fiddled with America's hands, as his face warmed up. "Did you still want. . . to go out with me?"

America smiled, leaning forward to kiss Russia on the cheek. "Absolutely."

His eyes widened a little and he brushed his fingers over the spot where America had kissed him. "Uh, cool," was all he could think to say, stunned by the realization that he not only is dating someone for the first time, but he was his first boyfriend.

America covered his mouth, trying to hold back a chuckle but seeing him flushed so red and wide-eyed like a deer in headlights was hilarious. He laughed, snapping Russia from his moment of shock. He lightly laughed with America, realizing how ridiculous he must have looked.

"Can we tell Germany and Poland?" America asked after a moment of laughter.

"I'll never hear the end of it from Poland, but yeah, we can," Russia laid down, thinking how he's going to get a lot of comments about him taking so long, or being so unnecessarily worried.

"Okay, is there anyone else I can tell or is it just them? What about Canada?"

"I don't care if he knows, he can keep a secret. Just those three for now."

"And pretty sure like, everybody here," America said, pulling his knees to his chest and looking out towards the cave opening. "You didn't exactly play straight well. And you didn't deny being my boyfriend when Hopi brought it up~"

"Haud saw us, I couldn't exactly lie and have them believe me."

America smiled looking down at Russia, seeing how he was still red and avoiding eye contact. He was adorable like that, all blushy and embarrassed. He missed this.

He stretched his arms and reached to grab his jacket, checking the insides of the pockets. Empty, no phone or anything. Not even his swiss army knife.

"What are you doing?" Russia asked, sitting up.

"I was looking for my stuff," he answered while he slipped on his jacket. "And it's kind of cold in here."

"Yeah, they knew enough to take your phones."

"Those fuckers."

"We can hear you," came a voice from outside the cave room.

"My bad!" America yelled back, realizing that they weren't alone. Makes sense, they must be guards or something.

His stomach rumbled and added, "Hey, peoples! Can we get some food or something? I haven't eaten since like lunch yesterday."

"Breakfast is in a few hours," a guard said as he stood in the middle of the entrance. He looked familiar, of course, everyone here did, but. Not a good familiar. Like he knew he shouldn't be in his sights at all.

"Uhhh," America swallowed and tried to ignore the feeling. "Yeah, but can we have a snack then? Something to hold us over?"

The tribe had a white-based flag, with a rainbow design in the circle around what looked like a tree on the back of a turtle. It was a bright and happy-looking flag, which juxtaposed their darkened expression.

"Please?" America added, scooting back a little towards Russia.

After a moment, he nodded and turned to an unseen guard, saying something too quiet for them to hear. He turned back to the two inside the cave room, the sound of the other guard walking away slowly fading.

An awkward silence filled the room as America was caught in a staring contest with the remaining guard. He was losing and wanted to hurry it up, but still couldn't break eye contact.

Jesus fuck, who was this guy?

"So uh," Russia cut through the silent stairs, getting a sigh of relief from America. "What's your name?"

The guard looked at Russia, quickly scanning him before relaxing his expression. "Powhatan."

"Russia," he gestured to himself. "I'm assuming you know America?"

Powhatan nodded, not having looked in the said country's direction. Rude maybe, but America was happy he didn't. He didn't think he could stand to have that malicious stare burned into him again. Whatever it is he did, he really wishes he hadn't.

Russia tried to make small talk with the tribe, starting out almost one-sided and kind of awkward. Powhatan slowly broke, relaxing a bit more, and was able to carry a conversation. So long as America stayed silent that was. He tried to add one thing to their conversation and it clearly wasn't welcomed by the guy.

When the other guard came back, America couldn't have been more thrilled. Powhatan left them both alone to eat, not before glaring at

America.

"I wish I could go back in time to stop myself from doing whatever it was I did to him," America muttered to Russia as he grabbed some bread out of the basket they were given.

"Yeah, what did you even do?"

"Dude I have no fucking clue. Nothing good by the looks of it. He scares the shit out of me, though."

Russia nodded, taking a bite of an apple. They were given what looked like an assortment of fruit and some bits of bread. It wasn't a lot, but better than what he was expecting. He was almost certain they'd be given scraps of food to eat, even if Haud said they weren't prisoners he had to be prepared regardless.

"Hopefully you two won't have to see much of each other then."

"Yeah," America said through a full mouth. "No doubt there's going to be more people like that waiting for me out there."

Russia noticed his tone lower and saw him bringing his knees to his chest. He swallowed his bite of food and rested his hand on his shoulder. "Did you want to talk about it? I mean, it could help, couldn't it?"

America shrugged. "I barely remember it. It was all a past life, or should be one at least."

"Yeah, weird, all of that huh?" Russia moved to sit next to him, leaning against the cave wall. "What's it like remembering past lives?"

"Weird. I dunno. I remember some things, and I can tell it's not *m*y memory even though it kind of is at the same time? I dunno, I just never thought too much about it."

He tore off a soft part of the bread and looked at it. He remembered making bread, that's why he loved doing it with France. Cause, well it was his mom and she took the time to understand him, but also he had faint memories of baking bread with other countries he can't

remember the faces of. Countries or tribes? He didn't know.

"I hated not knowing what happened, cause if I remembered none of this wouldn't have happened," America gestured to the room around them. "And I probably would have done something about everyone I hurt. At least I hope I would have."

"Well, you're doing something about it now."

"Yeah, I only had to be kidnapped," America snorted.

"Well, it is a great motivator."

"Pfft-"

Russia smiled when he saw America trying not to laugh. He knew he wasn't the best with people and making them feel better but a laugh was a good sign. Just do what Poland would do.

"What is this, the second time we've been kidnapped and locked in a cave with each other?"

"Yeah. Same people, too."

"Huh. If I had a nickel for each time this has happened, I would have two nickles. Which isn't a lot, but it's weird that it's happened twice."

Russia chuckled, despite not getting the reference. "Yeah weird, ever since I've met you it's been one interesting adventure after the other."

"At least I'm not boring," America shrugged, knowing that if he hadn't had Russia there for most of it he probably would have died.

"Can't imagine the great United States of America can ever be boring."

"Oh breaking out my stage name, huh Ruski?"

"What, and Ruski is mine?"

"No, it's your adorable nickname that I'm copywriting so that no one can call you that but me."

"I don't think you can copyright a nickname," Russia rolled his eyes, finishing off his apple.

"Bitch, watch me. I can do anything."

"Anything but have common sense?"

With a fake offended gasp, America looked up at Russia as he tried to hide a smug smile. "How dare you insult me. This is war."

"Uh-huh, you declaring war on me now?"

"Absolutely, you attacked me, that was a hate crime."

"That's not what a hate crime is."

"Well, I hated it. So yes it is, it's in the name."

America crossed his arms and pretended to pout, turning away from Russia. He sat up a bit more and leaned over to rest his head on top of America's. "Are you pouting?"

"Well duh. I pretend to be offended and pout, and you come swooping in giving me affection to make up for my feelings you so horribly hurt," America explained, still pretending to pout. He let out a dramatic "hmpf" for extra emphasis, readjusting his crossed arms.

Russia smiled, deciding to just follow along with what America had not so discretely asked for. It was kind of cute, and he had been wanting to hold onto him in some way since they've woken up but he didn't know when to even bring that up.

He moved to wrap his arms around America's waist, dragging him into his lap and resting his head on his shoulder. "Is this what you wanted me to do?"

"Oh absolutely not," America peeked open an eye to see Russia looking up at him and his cheeks flushed pink. "Also definitely

would hate it if you gave me a little kiss."

Understanding the sarcasm, Russia grabbed America's wrist and lifted his hand, and placed a kiss on the back of it.

"Such a gentleman~" America teased, grabbing Russia's arm and putting it back so he was holding him again. He shut his eyes, leaning into Russia, humming calmly. He was about to get comfortable when he felt Russia's hold on him get tighter for a second as he adjusted himself to lay down. With a yawn, Russia curled up his legs, holding America close to him.

"Are you tired?"

"Da," he mumbled, his breath hitting the back of America's neck and he shivered. He was holding him close against his chest, laying in almost the fetal position so he had to do the same. His heart started to beat a little faster and he was happy he wasn't looking at Russia cause he wouldn't be able to stop his blushing from being very visible. He had a reputation of being the cocky top he shall not have that be ruined here.

After a while Russia fell back asleep, softly snoring while America played with his hand. His grip had loosened and America was measuring his hand with Russia's, debating if he should ever try to challenge him to an arm wrestle. He knew he was a lot stronger than he looked, he could pick up Russia if he wanted to. But Russia was also strong, obviously from working out or just good genetics. Maybe both.

He had Russia as a boyfriend.

He smiled at the welcomed, though random, thought. Russia, the hunk of a country with a thick sexy Russian accent and a nice ass, was his.

Oh, shit his dad would not be happy.

Fuck his dad, he's just gonna have to be okay with it.

Hopefully, he would be, he'd hate to have a conversation with him about how much of a terrible person Russia is because of his dad

and all that other shit. Yeah like, his dad sucked obviously but that doesn't mean the child of that parent will be like them. Russia is dating a guy, Soviet would have killed him for that. So obviously not the same.

Besides, Russia has helped him through so much. It's not like he could talk to his dad about any of it anyway, he doesn't listen.

After a while of America laying still and thinking, he slowly fell asleep. It didn't help that being held by Russia was calming and made him feel safe enough to pass out again.

As the proper waking time for everyone else approached, Haud was the one who retrieved America and Russia. Her kids tagged along, after having begged to see their brother and the Wolf. She wasn't going to allow it at first but she eventually relented.

The kids had run into the cave where Russia and America slept and jumped onto them. Russia had jumped up almost immediately, getting into a fighting stance with Onida hanging onto his shoulders, dangling in the air laughing. America wasn't so lucky and found himself at the bottom of a doggy pile.

"What's going on!" He yelled, muffled by someone's foot on his face.

"America we missed you!"

"Wake up brother, come on!"

"Mohawk, get your knee off of me!"

"Boys, let him get up!" Haud scolded, grabbing Onida off of Russia, who now understood what was happening.

The boys all scrambled off of America, who hurriedly sat up and tried to catch his breath. His back and legs hurt from being tackled so suddenly, and his head was spinning slightly so it took him a second to realize there were a bunch of kids looking up at him with wide smiles.

"Uh hey, what's up?" America nervously waved, not recognizing the ones right in front of him.

He noticed one of their smiles faltered and he slunk back a little.

Shit he knew these kids, didn't he? They looked familiar, obviously but everyone there did. He just woke up as well, he needed a bit of help.

"We've missed you," the one with a red flag said smiling wildly. "You and the wolf, we have to show you everything you missed!"

"Yeah, Onondaga has your old bow! But Mohawk broke it, so it doesn't work."

"Did not!"

"Yeah, you did!"

"It was Seneca's fault, he pushed me!"

"No, I didn't, you tripped!"

"I saw you pushed him, don't lie."

"Shut up Cy, no one asked you!"

America looked at the boys as they argued, glancing up at Haud as she shook her head. Before she can say anything to get them to stop, America started to laugh.

"You guys didn't change huh?" He said as tears started to blur his vision but he wiped them away before the kids could really notice. It had taken a second with his brain being slow at the moment, but their faces and voices started to bring some memories to the surface. He remembered names, knowing which one belonged to who and who they were. They were his brothers, his family, and his fellow trouble makers that aged slowly. It's been a few centuries since he first met them, and they looked roughly the same age.

"Come here," he scooped them all into a hug, smiling widely as they all hugged him back. He remembered braiding their hair, taking them along on small hunts, and telling ghost stories around a fire. He believed in them then too but found them being scared funny so he told them anyway.

Haud allowed America to talk to his brothers for a while, sitting down to reminisce on the past as well. Everyone had a silent agreement to not discuss the bad stuff, which was easy for the kids cause they didn't want to talk about that stuff anyway.

Mohawk, the one who had slumped down when America hadn't immediately recognized them, was delighted when he brought up stories they had all shared. He had looked up to America, as well as everyone else, but had taken it upon himself to try to fill the role America had in the community after everything went bad. Seeing him again, almost the same as he was then took off some of that worry, but unfortunately replaced it with a new one. If he was the same as before, doesn't that mean the same things can happen? Would he forget everyone again and hurt his mother? Would he abandon them again and move in with an older man in a big palace again?

It didn't look like any of the others shared the same worries, so he didn't say anything. If his mother wasn't worried, then he shouldn't either.

Eventually, they all left the cave systems and went to eat breakfast with everyone. Most of everyone was in a longhouse, already eating if not finishing up. Almost immediately, Haud's boy's left to go get their hands on some food. Haud herself pointed to where the food was and then where the two's brothers were. Canada was eating and sitting next to Kaz, surrounded by a few other younger tribes, showing off his glowing wings. When the two noticed their corresponding brothers, they leaped up to greet them.

"Russia, Russia! You will not believe what I learned!" Kaz excitedly said, flying over people to reach him. Russia had to take a few steps back so Kaz didn't crash into him as he settled down on the ground.

"What is it?" He asked with a slight chuckle, watching as the glow from his wings faded quickly.

"Watch, watch," Kaz said excitedly shaking his hands. He shut his eyes and closed his hands into tight fists as he concentrated.

Canada managed to squeeze his way past people, apologizing even

when he clearly wasn't in anyone's way, and rushed to give America a tight hug. He knew he was going to be fine, but still, the worry of what-ifs had plagued his mind. Everyone was being friendly so far, but to Canada, it felt like they were being too friendly. Something just felt off, so seeing America standing and fine-apart from his eyes obviously and some black stains on his shirt and jacket fur was a relief.

"Thank God you're okay," Canada said, letting America go but keeping his hands on his shoulders.

"Don't worry bro-bro, I'm always gonna be okay," America tried to brush off his worry, noticing that his eye path was replaced by a better-fitting leather one. He kind of looked like a pirate.

When Kaz frustratedly groaned, America looked over at him puzzled. He noticed how he stood, his knees slightly bent and straining to do something.

"Hey, Kaz buddy, what are you tryna do take a shit in front of us all?"

Kaz glared at him, but relaxed his stance and let out a sigh.

"No, I did it before, they showed me a thing countries with wings can do," he said standing up straight, his feathered wings bouncing. "It's a living skill, we can make our wings smaller and hide them so that they don't get attacked. We all can do so."

"Really? Cool," America sniffed, smelling the food. He remembered Mexico wings, something his sister nearly killed him over. Maybe that's how he was able to hide them for that long. Maybe that's how a lot of other countries were able to hide them.

"Yes, it was something even before," Kaz lowered his voice and looked around as if they were being spied on. There were eyes on them, but being the outsiders, that were normal. "Ya know, Germany's father, attacked Poland."

"If it's a survival tactic, I wonder what happened so far back in our history to make it a gene that every winged folk must have in order

to survive," Russia thought out loud, trying to think of what could have been that big of a natural threat. It must've been something far back in time, before the status of countries even existed.

"Yeah yeah, we can think about that later, I'm hungry," America said grabbing Russia's hand and leading them both to the table with food at it.

Canada started to follow the two but then noticed Kaz hadn't moved. He was standing still, trying to shrink his wings again. They twitched from the effort, and to his credit, he had done it a little bit before, shrinking a few inches.

He was kind of adorable all excited about learning more about his wings. He only knew for certain he and his brother had them, and his foster dad didn't know anything about them so it's not like he could help.

The morning went by pretty peacefully, America mostly being dragged around by his younger brothers. They were excited about his return and couldn't focus on one thing at a time, trying to make up for a few centuries of lost time. Russia followed America around, talking with Kaz as he did. Canada had been pulled away again and whatever it was for Kaz didn't know. He didn't want to talk about it, but if it was cause he couldn't or just didn't want to he didn't know.

Russia assumed it was for the same reason they needed America. He seemed more put together about it though, so he might of either had completely no memory of it or he had worked past it. He knew Canada in the past hadn't been as nice and forward-thinking as he was now, as was the case for a lot of other countries as well. He must have been easier to work with cause of it.

Eventually, as the brothers talked, they reverted back to Russian and Kazakh. It was much easier for Kaz, so he rather preferred it.

Tuscarora, who trailed in the back a little, noticed the strange language and turned around to ask, "what is that? What are you speaking in?"

"Our language," Kaz answered in English.

"Yeah they can speak a different one, and plus English, like ya'll, Rory," America added looking back at the youngest of his brothers.

"I'm still learning!" Kaz's excitement caused his wings to open up a bit and hit Russia in the face.

The kids laughed, and so did Kaz when he realized he hit him again. Russia muttered something in Russian, wiping his face to make sure nothing was on it. Why was he the one to always get hit in the face by wings?

A few tribes walked by, waving at the kids but giving the newcomers a look. One not necessarily out of malice but more distrust and uncertainty.

As calm as everything felt so far, Russia reminded himself they weren't welcomed. America especially, though the community seemed torn. Huad was being the most supportive and so far, the guard Powhatan was being the least. He had to assume they would be seen the same way just by association.

Kaz noticed Russia had gone back to his silent and analyzing mode so he nudged his side a bit to get him out of it. It worked for a moment, Kaz smiling up at him. Russia sighed and gave a small smile back at him, trying to relax.

"Hey, guys!"

Kaz nearly pushed Russia out of his way when he heard Canada's voice. He saw his favorite country waving toward them, looking the same as he did when he had to leave the group. His hair was messy and unbrushed, tucked under his beanie, his leather eye patch covering his eye, and wearing the same unkempt clothes.

Acting without thought, Kaz jumped and flew over to him, tackling him into a hug. Canada had to lean back to steady himself, stumbling a little bit. He felt Kaz's tight hold on him and he smiled down at the country who had his wings spread out excitedly.

"I wasn't gone that long Kaz," Canada chuckled, trying his best to hug him back. His arms were pinned to his sides so his best was

more hugging with his hands.

"I know, it was long to me," Kaz said, letting go of Canada and taking a step back. Personal space, he reminded himself. He forgets countries like that. "What did they want?"

"Oh, um," Canada brushed back his hair, subconsciously using that motion as a way to cover his eye slightly. "They wanted to talk to me about some stuff I did in the past. I wasn't the nicest then, so now that they had America here they wanted to repair our relationship. I came from them after all, they were my family before France, the empire, or Britain even came to their land."

Kaz nodded, not understanding what he meant by that. He always assumed he was Britain's actual son, like America was.

"You were adopted like me?" Kaz asked, trying to understand.

Canada nodded. "Yeah. I apparently wandered away when I was a kid and they couldn't find me. It was years later when they realized I had already been taken in by France."

"Like Soviet did for me and others," Kaz added, to show he understood what he was saying. He was taken when he was a kid by Soviet. He doesn't remember anything about where he came from or if he had other parents before him. He never thought to find out.

"Yeah, kind of like that. I didn't know really where I came from and neither did my dad, so he couldn't tell me much." Canada started to walk to where he saw America and Russia where. He noticed they were surrounded by a group of younger tribes, one of them on Russia's shoulders and the others clearly asking for a turn. Those must of been America's brothers when he lived with them, he thought. He had a whole family here, one he wasn't even blood-related to. One he so easily abandoned and fought against. Canada wasn't blood-related to him but was still seen as his brother. Does that mean he isn't above them in any way? Would America turn on him and forget everything they've done together? Would that mean that one day he'll be where the tribes were; desperately reaching for the past, one that can never come back?

He was one of them after all. Where he came from, he didn't share any European blood. Even his name, the one thing he was certain about his entire life, it wasn't European. But all he's known is that life. He knew he didn't fit in with it, he's always felt out of place in everything it seems. His family, his home, his upbringing, heck even his own body.

Canada rubbed his chest, rubbing his palm over his healed scars. Maybe trying to reconnect with where he really came from can give him that feeling of belonging he had craved his entire life. If his family accepted him as he was, they shouldn't be against him trying to learn about his biological family. The tribes here didn't seem against it. They all were more preoccupied with America, which they explained why to him. He might possibly be a danger to himself and them, so they had to prioritize him for now.

Canada understood. His father was the same way.

He hadn't realized he had stopped walking and was meekly standing in place watching America play with his brothers. Kaz had stopped with him, looking between Canada and the others. He noticed how his eyebrows furrowed together and his lips stretched back into a worried frown. Whatever he was thinking of clearly wasn't good.

He looked back to his brother and America to see if there was something wrong there he hadn't immediately noticed. But what he saw was what looked like a happy family. Even Haud, the lady who helped Kaz learn about his wings, had come over to stand next to America. She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him on his forehead before saying something he couldn't hear. America nodded and smiled, happily following her into a nearby tent-like structure.

Why did Canada look sad?

Before Kaz could ask, Canada said, "my birth mother, she um. She died a few years after losing me."

Oooooh. Yeah, that'll do it.

Kaz looked up at him and then to the tent America had gone into

with Haud. Oh. Ooooooooh. Ow.

He hugged Canada tightly, wrapping his wings around him. No wonder he looked sad. He was always sad when he saw how close Russia was to Soviet. He never got a chance to meet his birth family, not knowing if he had a mom or a dad or if he was just by himself. And the other daunting question he didn't like to think of; if he did have a birth family, what happened to them for Soviet to take him in?

Canada accepted the hug, relaxing into the hold. He didn't mention how she died and didn't want to. He wasn't ready to face that just yet. Knowing he wouldn't have that chance America has to reunite with his mother, and learn more about his childhood from her, it was all a lot. He didn't want to also face the fact that he might have been the direct cause of her death.

A little ways away, Russia was sitting down on a tree stump trying to get the kids to settle down. America was summoned by his mother for something, so they had to wait for him. Trying to settle down six kids was hard, but once he suggested he tell them some stories he had from his childhood they seemed interested. Mohawk, one of the older siblings looked uninterested and upset that he was left with this stranger, but eventually came around when he told the story about how he went on a hunting trip with his dad for the first time and got attacked by the wolf.

They called him "The Wolf" still, even though he reminded them his name was Russia. Kids will pick and chose what they want to listen to.

Things were peaceful, Kaz and Canada settling in next to the kids to listen to Russia tell stories. A few other younger tribes noticed the storytelling, a common thing many elders would do to entertain the kids while their parents were busy, and sat down to listen. Of course, Russia only really told stories to his siblings and a few other choice countries, so suddenly having a bigger audience, one that was mostly considerably younger at that, was hard to get used to as quickly as he needed to. He still managed, and it helped when Canada gave little motions with his hand on what was a good thing to talk about and what wasn't.

Eventually, America came back, looking a little more worried than when he had left. He touched his new short braid in his hair, his mother being the one to do it. He shouldn't be here, he knew that for certain now. It would only bring more trouble.

He looked up and noticed Russia sitting on the tree stump surrounded by kids, smiling brightly as he talked. For a moment, America forgot about his troubling talk and he smiled, putting his hands in his pockets. He had been given his stuff back, along with everyone else's. Their phones didn't have any charge left in them, being drained so they couldn't call for help or something.

Russia glanced over in America's direction and saw how he was smiling at him, and his words faltered for just a moment. He shook his head and refocused himself hoping no one would notice his reddened cheeks.

Not wanting to disturb everyone, America stayed away from the group. He kind of didn't want to be by people anyways, but he still wasn't allowed out of sight. It was made very clear by the obviously armed guards watching him from a few yards away. He even noticed that everyone had some form of weapon on them. Even the older kids had sheaths for small daggers.

He wasn't welcomed here, despite the calm atmosphere and the reassurance from his mother.

"You will be okay as long as you do the right thing," she had told him.

He was never known for doing the right thing, and everyone here knew that. Haud looked like she was the only one who unconditionally believed he was no longer a threat. That him being there was their sign that they could fix everything.

Of course, he wants to fix everything, America knew he did bad things. But those were lifetimes ago, he literally wasn't the same person who had done all that. It didn't feel fair, but it did at the same time. His ignoring the problem as he had, didn't help and it only worsened the problem so he should be held accountable for that. But. But? There shouldn't be a but it should just be that. Plain

and simple.

Frustratingly, America kicked the snow at his feet and frowned. There's stuff he knows they aren't telling him. They say he's not ready, he has to wait. He knows how 'fragile' his mind could be or whatever they said, but he hated not knowing about his past. He didn't like that they all knew and he didn't. He didn't like how almost everyone had this look in their eyes when they looked at him, a look he couldn't understand but knew it wasn't anything good. He hated how he could be judged and tried for something he barely even knows.

His apparent mother wouldn't tell him.

He was happy to be reunited with her, of course, but now that he had a bit more time to process everything, he didn't know how to feel. He felt a lost connection with this woman, she treated him almost immeadilty like her kid, he had memories of them together, it should have been all okay. But, it just didn't feel like he knew her. She didn't know him. They were both bonding over the past, relating to each other over a memory. She wasn't the same person as she was in his memories. That tribe hadn't gone through all she had yet. And he wasn't the same kid in her memories. He wasn't a kid anymore, that was it. She was holding onto a memory of a child that doesn't exist anymore.

Was that bad to think about? Was he just panicking about everything and simply didn't know how to deal with anything in his head? Is he just trying to act out to regain some form of control of the situation? Or is everything he thinks a valid concern? Is he biased? Is she biased?

America had slowly made his way to an empty bench and sat down on it to think.

Haud had pulled him away to speak privately with her and a few other older tribes. He could tell it was a heavier topic just based on how she looked. Hopi was there, too, her wrinkled face only deepened with the weight of the worry she held.

He had been told that he was horrible. Practically a monster. Well,

they put it into nicer words but he understood what they really had meant.

"You changed and we didn't understand why."

Read between the lines, and America knew that what that meant was; "You became a huge asshole for no reason and tried to kill us."

America had lived with them for decades, traveling from tribe to tribe to learn their culture and their language. He was like an excited sponge, absorbing information from everyone he met and trading it with his own. Things he learned in Europe, new materials, weapons for hunts, and ways to dress and build, it was for the most part good. He wasn't easily accepted by everyone but he was always accompanied by someone who was family and allies with other tribes to maintain his safety.

But, he deemed his home to be with Haudenosaunee and her six sons. His brothers. He learned their way of governing, which he realized he used as the basis for his own. It was almost like an exact copy, of course, he learned that from them and not just from some fancy French books. A lot of his history, his reasons for doing things, he realized was so intertwined snd rooted in his lives spent with these tribes.

Lives. He has died with them before. Once when he was young, when they first had found him on that beach after being left by Britain. He had drowned trying to swim back to the boat, he was told. He doesn't remember that. He remembered being left there and told he was old enough to start pulling in resources. Like a proper colony.

Another in a hunting accident. He had been revived, brought back to life. No reset, nothing like that. Just as he was when he died. Haud had been the one with the magic to do that on the first try. She was the reason that even when he died a few times after that he was able to stay the same. Be the same person.

Up until more recent deaths. When he was "no longer in his care."

Translation: he attacked everyone and was sent away. Or

something. Maybe he ran away. Or pushed everyone into hiding. There were reasons they had been in hiding up until now. Hiding in vast cave systems that spanned the entire island. It was because of him, he knew. They didn't say, but they didn't have to.

They explained to him they didn't want to get too into detail, saying that he needed time to process. Allow himself to understand everything and get used to his new reality.

His true reality. The only reality.

He was a monster and was punished justly.

At least he thought he was. Obviously, he was, duh there was no arguing that he was fucked up. And to think otherwise? That would make him selfish and just desperate to always be in the right and never take accountability.

Of course, doing that would prove to the tribes he hadn't changed. He wanted to show them he had, he wasn't that same America who had done all that. That deserved those hateful stares, those hushed whispers, and side glances. He was a new country, literally a different person than the one who had attacked them.

But they held such secrecy around his own past, he would be lying if he said he didn't have some doubts. Should he believe these random people when they tell him he's horrible? Or should he defend who he is now? Would it be wrong? Why did he so easily believe them when they said he was horrible.

Cause you're depressed and would believe anyone who said that duh.

"You okay?"

America looked up to see Canada standing in front of him, his hands in his pockets and a worried frown. America noticed his hunched-over stance, his hands tangled with each other, and his bouncing knee.

He cleared his throat, settled his nervous tics, and dug in his pocket. "Yeah I'm fine, I got your stuff back by the way."

Canada frowned, knowing he was lying but waited until he was handed his phone and what looks like the others as well.

"They drained the batteries," America explained when Canada tried to turn his phone on. The black screen with the indication of a low battery confirmed what he had said.

"Thanks," Canada said putting everyone's things away in his coat. He was about to ask another question, but America beat him to it.

"So, what have they been doing to you? The same 'we are your past and the inevitable future' stuff like me or?"

Canada shrugged. "I wouldn't put it like that, but yeah. They explained to me where I came from, who my mother was, and that she passed."

"Oh shit dude, I'm sorry," America wrapped his arm around Canda's shoulders. He had to bend down a little for America to be able to do that, but he didn't mind.

"It's okay, I guess. I never really met her and I don't really remember anything anyways."

America nodded, looking past Canada for a moment to see his own long-lost mother. Maybe he was being dramatic, at least he still has a chance to talk to her.

"But, they want to repair broken bridges and I want to learn more about where I came from anyway, so I think I'm going to come back. A-After we tell our dad, that is."

"Yeah," America sighed. "I don't know if we should tell dad, I mean. Wasn't he also kind of an asshole to these guys, plus he's not the most understanding. I doubt he'd listen and would probably instead hunt these guys down for like kidnapping us."

"We went to them, so technically we trespassed. So it would be more of a hostage situation if anything."

"Yeah like dad would care about technicalities."

Canada nodded, choosing to agree with America instead of arguing. He didn't have the mental strength for one anyway, not with so many things happening all at once. For all his complaints about their father not wanting to listen to him, America did the same thing.

"Still, I want to know if they can help get rid of the whole black eye thing we got going on."

"I'm not sure they can do it the same way for both of us."

"What do you mean?" America looked at Canada with a raised brow, his hands in his pockets.

"Apparently, whatever magic they did to cause this, they did yours differently. At the time, Huad I think it was, she was so filled with anger and sadness that it affected the spell she cast. The curse you have, it's more unpredictable than mine."

"They didn't tell me that," America said looking over to Haud. She was playing with her kids, trying to help Russia keep them entertained. She glanced up and noticed America's gaze and smiled, waving her hand slightly.

He hesitantly waved back.

"Well, it was a while after that when they did the same spell to me. Someone else had asked Huad to do it so it was more thought-out and I guess worked properly. It's supposed to be a gradual curse, only they can stop it."

America looked to the ground, the snow beneath his feet. Of course, he knew they were the ones who gave him this curse, he knew he must've deserved it. But his own mother? The woman who has been pushing for him to work with them the most. Is she really trying to help or is she just looking to finish what she started?

He's not safe here.

"From what I guess, something must have went- America? You okay?"

Canada paused what he was saying and took a step closer to his brother. He had noticed how his hands curled into fists held so tight that his arms were shaking. He held his head low and his eyes open wide, pinpoint pupils starting at the snow-covered ground.

Slowly what looked like tears dotted his eyes before dropping to the ground.

"America, hey what's wrong?"

Russia glanced over, seeing Canada's hand resting on his brother's shoulder. He saw America's stance and sat up straight, hesitantly watching.

It was when Canada tore his hand away and stumbled back that Russia sprang to his feet.

America collapsed to his knees and held his stomach tightly, his chin to his chest. His body shook as he gagged, instinctively covering his mouth as he felt the black liquid start to rise in his throat.

Guards rushed over as well, reaching America before Russia. A pair held him and Canada away as others started to escort the young and elderly back into the caves.

Seneca weaseled out of the rush of tribes, pushing past the slightly distracted guards who kept glancing back at America. He was groaning in pain, the volume of which exponentially growing by the second. He didn't know what his plan was to even do when he reached America, but he just wanted to help his brother.

Thankfully, Huad spotted her son trying to run to America and she quickly grabbed him.

"Seneca, no, you have to go with the others."

"Hë'ëh, aknö:eh, I wanna help!" He yelled, trying and failing to worm his way free. He was quickly handed to a passing older tribe.

"I promise, son, I'll fix this," Haud said, and Seneca had no choice but to watch her quickly turn to run to America. He still struggled

to break free but it was useless and America's cries of pain started to grow faint as he was rushed deeper into the caves.

"Ö:gweh! Dasgyenöwö’s! (Someone! Help me!)" America screamed, his fingers digging into his coat and grabbing his sleeves and pulling them tightly.

His cries echoed through the woods around them. They cut through the almost silent forest, reaching far beyond the outer borders of the village. Uncovered and listening intensely around him, Britain's ears flicked upon hearing it.

"Boys, wait," he said and the two he was with obeyed. They held their breath, scared to even move in the slightest. A faint cry of pain, even if it were intelligible, rang out. It was unmistakenly America.

"Did you hear that?" Australia asked, straightening out and looking at Zee. He nodded frantically, turning to Britain and saying, "he sounded hurt, Dad, what if he was attacked by an animal?"

Britain started running in the direction of the screams.

At the camp, Canada was frantically trying to explain how America's episodes have been. He clung to Kaz with tears streaming down his face and struggled to not panic. "He's been fighting us lately, he doesn't know what he's doing he blacks out, it's. Its. We-we have to restrain him!"

"Don't hurt him," Russia demanded, leaning forward but being held back by two guards, one of them being Navajo.

America laid on his side, grunting and crying in pain. Black liquid dripped from his mouth and his yelling only paused for him to throw up. An unintroduced tribe had set herself next to America making sure he didn't choke or hurt himself.

"Winnebago," a guard put a name to the face. "Try to hold him while we tie his wrists together."

She nodded, wrapping her arms around America and propping him up. As soon as he felt a little bit restrained, his eyes opened wide

and he started to thrash around.

"Hë'ëh, hë'ëh, hë'ëh, hë'ëh, (No, no, no, no!)" He screamed. "Ësgiwätga, ësgiwätga, ësgiwätga gadöishöhgwa'! Da'agi:'eyös, Së:nöh niya:wëh ago:'eyös! (Let me go, let me go, please let me go! I don't want to die, don't let me die!)"

Canada choked on his cry, and he buried his head into Kaz's chest. The startled country couldn't take his eyes off of America but still wrapped his arms tightly around Canada. He cupped his wings around them slightly, trying his best to comfort him while still being distracted. He's never seen anything like this. Of course, he was given a small gist of things but never imagined this.

America kicking and struggling, yelling in another foreign language, as some weird black liquid pooled from his mouth. Kaz looked to his brother, not knowing how he should be right then, and saw he was standing still, his hands clenched in shaking fists and staring at America. Stand to the side and keep out of the way it is.

"Ëtodiyö:je', gadöishöhgwa' ë'sgidahset, sadahset, desë:hda:t! Hë'ëh, hë'ëh, hë'ëh! Ësgiwätga, ësgiwätga, ëagenyo', ëagenyo'! (They're coming, please hide me, hide, run! No, no, no! Let me go, let me go, I'll kill you! I'll fucking kill you!)"

Kaz hugged Canada tighter and instinctively kissed his head when he heard his breath hitched.

Wrists and ankles tied, Winnebago and the other guard tried to hold America still while Haud kneeled to look at him closer. She studied his face, seeing the black liquid staining his clothing and the disturbed snow around them.

Quietly, she started to hum a small tune, watching America closely. He didn't seem to hear her as he continued to scream and shout, trying to break free still.

"Dasgyenöwö’s gwatöishöhgwë'! Aknö'ëh! Aknö'ëh dasgyenöwö's! (Help me, someone, please! Mom! Mom help!)"

Haud's eyes widened and she stopped her humming for a second.

She shook her head and moved closer, humming louder then began to sing the tune.

Slowly America stopped thrashing around, his yelling and cries of pain silencing. His breathing remained heavy, and he panted but other than that remained still.

The relief that came over everyone was visible and certainly felt in the air. Canada even stood up straight and looked at his brother, confused but relieved too. Happy with the progress already, Haud continued to sing the lullaby she used to sing to him when he was in her care.

Haud looked to the guard and nudge her hand to the ropes around his ankles. He nodded and began to untie them.

He was calm, his breathing steadied now too.

As soon as he was free to stand, Haud grabbed America's hands and helped him to his feet. She continued to sing as she wiped away the black liquid that now slowed to a trickle.

"How?" Canada whispered to himself, looking at the other tribes who all looked at Haud like she had slightly lost her mind. Which wasn't too comforting.

Haud's lullaby quieted as the song ended and she prepared herself for America to resume his yelling and fighting. Instead, he lowered his head and looked to the ground, Haud let go of his still tied hands and they settled in front of him. He stood in front of everyone jarringly still and quiet.

"America?" Haud asked, reaching out to rest her hand on his shoulder. The guards tensed up and reached for their weapons. Russia eyed Navajo's hand on the handle of his knife and prepared himself to have to grab it from him. There weren't as many tribes out here now, they wouldn't be easily brought down if they has to fight and there was no way he was gonna let America get stabbed.

The moment Haud's hand made contact with his shoulder, America raised his head. His eyes were pure black and his mouth was

slightly agape a similar black void. The same black liquid dripped from America's eyes as it did his mouth.

He pulled his wrists apart, ripping through the rope easily. Haud was briskly pulled back by Navajo, and when reaching for his knife, he felt it suddenly be taken from his hand.

Russia held it away from him and to his side to try and hopefully not pose as a threat still. When the only other guard turned to him he knew it didn't work, but he still liked his odds.

"Drop the knife," he yelled, pointing a spear at him.

"I don't want to fight you," Russia tried to say, keeping both of them in his line of sight.

"Then put the knife down!"

"Only if you don't hurt him."

"Put. The knife. Down." The guard gestured his spear at the ground for a second. Russia eyed everyone, then looked to America who after breaking free from his restraints hasn't done anything. He stood there, his head in his direction almost like he was looking at him. He couldn't tell anyways, what faint grey irises he had were completely black now.

Russia threw the knife to the side and raised his hands. Navajo had noticed America's stillness as well and eyed him as he went to retrieve his knife, muttering curses about how he had said drop it not throw it.

The guard grabbed Russia's wrists and worked on restraining him.

Too scared to move from their spots, Canada got a good look at his brother now that Navajo wasn't in the way of his line of sight. He saw his relaxed expression, his dark eyes that looked like they absorbed light, and a matching inky blackness that poured from his mouth and eyes.

The moment America knew Canada could see him, he sharply turned his head to him. That caused the country to jump and let out

a small yelp, holding onto Kaz tighter.

America raised his arm, pointing right at his frightened brother. Then slowly he opened his hand and held out his palm. He faced Canada, unmoving and apparently waiting for the other.

Haud looked between the two, uncertain. She didn't know what this was. She had hoped her singing the old lullaby would just calm him down and bring him out of the episode. Is this what that looked like?

Not knowing what to do, everyone looked to Canada to see if he would make a move. None of the tribes wanted to say it, but if America only attacked Canada it would have been a relief. Regardless, Navajo got ready to defend the tall country in case.

"I think he wants your hand," Kaz whispered to Canada, breaking him out of his paralyzed state. He nodded slightly, before swallowing his fear and cautiously approached the tranced America. Unbeknownst to him, Kaz had tried to reach out for him to stay with him but his fear made his movements sluggish and he didn't react in time.

"Canada, has he done this before?" Haud asked, her eyes trained on her son.

Canada shook his head. "No, ma'am. I. I don't know what this is."

He stood in front of his brother, his hand resting near his chest and scared to set it on America's. He had no idea what was happening to America, if he was going to grab him and then stab him or something, he didn't know.

Haud wanted to warn against it when she saw Canada slowly start to place his hand on America's. A feeling of dread arose in her and she ignored it. Did she make things worse, or is this a path to fixing things?

Once Canada took his brother's hand, his body tensed. His eyes widened as his uncovered one filled with darkness, becoming a void that leaked its emptiness like tears. The same liquid dripped from

Canada's mouth, just as America.

Seeing that, Kaz tried to run to Canada to pull him away, something to get whatever that was to stop. Navajo jumped into action and restrained Kaz pinning his arms to his back and holding his wings in the process. He protested in pain from his wings being forced against his body, pulling on his feathers.

"Hey, let him go!" Russia yelled, trying to run to his brother. The guard forced the country back to his knees and tightened the rope around his wrists. Having no choice, Russia stopped struggling and looked to Haud to hopefully reason with her. He opened his mouth to protest but stopped before he could get a word out.

Haud was staring at the two with pitch-black eyes as their arms found their ways back to their sides.

"Elablzkge'bvkge, tvw:gtk:bolt. Bopa'pa'grr:wl:gzl," America spoke, still as he did.

"Bvsvzzvw'pat'b:zlgr. Tlpbolz:gzl:bol novaba wov'ogcl'irgpslk bv:all:pb." Canada seemed to respond to him before his frame began to sway. His knees buckled under him and he collapsed into the snow, his eye fluttering to a close.

Slowly America turned to Haud and she stumbled back into Winnebago, the two falling to the snow. Navajo dragged Kaz with him, putting himself in front of the fallen tribes and the threat.

"What did he say? Did you understand what he said?" Haud asked, looking up at Navajo and then to anyone for any kind of answer. That wasn't a language any of them recognized.

In a stiff rigid motion, America raised his hand and pointed to the woods. Everyone looked and saw nothing. In a monotone voice, America's only context to what he was doing was, "He's here."

Then he collapsed, joining his brother on the snow beneath him.

"America!" Haud scrambled to her feet slipping on the snow and practically crawling to her fallen son.

"What happened, is he okay!" Russia yelled, trying to get back onto his feet again but just as fast he felt a harsh kick to rhe back of his knee and he collapsed.

"Is he breathing? Haud, tell me something please!" He shouted regardless.

Haud checked his pulse and nodded. He was alive, whatever that was wasn't immediately lethal. Canada looked to still be breathing as well, thank goodness.

"Let us go!" Kaz yelled, trying to stretch out his wings to try and throw Navajo off of him. That earned him a personal meeting with the ground.

He yelled when he hit the ground, feeling his captor's knee being pressed into his bak."It hurts, stop!"

"Stop fighting me and it won't hurt!"

"Hey, let him go, you're hurting him!" Russia yelled, lunging for his brother but he was met with the same fate. "Get off of us, we're not you're enemies!"

"It hurts, why won't you stop!" Kaz yelled, struggling more. He yelled curses in both Kazakh and English, his wing's glow flickering to life even if it was a weak attempt at something. Anything, just to get this guy off of him.

"Get away from my son!"

Haud looked up just in time to see a dark figure in front of her before she was hit with something upside her head that threw her back.

Britain stood over Haud, cane in hand, looking to his two sons. The two that were restraining Russia and Kazakhstan were easily overpowered with the help of New Zealand and Australia. Familiar faces the guards wore, but there was no time for that.

He knelt next to his son, placing his fingers on his neck to check his pulse. It was slow, not abnormally so, he was just passed out.

"Go, get the others."

Britain looked up to see the woman he knocked back trying to get back to her feet as the other woman was already running away. He looked and saw what looked like a cave opening in the cliffside, and with no one else coming from the different structures around them, the "others" had to be in the cave.

Russia found himself next to Britain's side just as the significantly smaller country rose to its feet.

"Take America and Canada, we have to get out of here."

"Britain, these people aren't-"

"With all due respect, shut the fuck up and do as I say," Britain turned his head slightly to look down at Russia. Just as he was about to protest, he noticed a glow in the other's eyes. It was unnatural and so jarring that Russia just shut his mouth and nodded, grabbing America up in his arms.

Britain turned to face the woman he had hit away with his cane just as she stood up. She rubbed her cheek, glaring at the oh so recognizable man. She waited hundreds of years for a proper excuse for this.

Without a word, Haud expanded her wings and lunged at Britain. He tried to dodge but she was faster than he expected. She grabbed him by his jacket and slammed him into the nearest object; one of the longhouses on the other side of the camp.

Zee tried to run after their dad but was stopped by Russia.

"Leave him, he said to get America and Canada out of here."

"Okay, okay, whatever gets us back home and warm faster," Zee ran to help Kaz pick up Canada. Kaz wanted to fly away with Canada but he knew if he tried he wouldn't get very far, Navajo must've done something to his wings when he was restrained they hurt too much to use.

"Guys, I don't think we're gonna have much more time," Aussie said,

glancing back at the cave. He held the two guards at spear point, both of them restrained and sitting on the ground back to back. The other three noticed what Aussie had meant when they heard the growing war cries and shouts echoing from the entrance.

"Shit," Russia said looking to where Britain was fighting Haud. He had lost his hat and was using his cane as his main line of defense while Haud was using what looked like a glowing warclub to try and bludgeoned him. There was no way to explain their ways out of this, they were now enemies for sure.

He glanced down at the tied guards, making eye contact with Navajo. As soon as he noticed, Navajo's eyes narrowed and he sneered.

"Come on let's go!"

Russia glanced up to see Kaz waving over to him, Canada's arm draped around his and Zee's shoulders and hurrying as fast as they could to the woodline

"Come on mate, we gotta get out of here," Aussie said throwing the spear to the side, far away from the tied guards.

Russia looked to Britain just in time for him to see him kick Haud to the ground. He almost ran to them to get him to stop fighting her, but as soon as he raised his foot, Haud lifted hers and kicked his leg away and he fell onto his back.

He'll be fine, he decided and ran to the woodline after the others.

Just as he hit the ground, Britain reached for his cane and saw Russia running off with America in his arms. He didn't see his other boys so he assumed they had been in front of Russia. Either way, they were getting out of here.

Then he saw other warriors running in the direction Russia had run.

Bollocks.

A sharp pain hit his chest as Haud's foot connected with it. She stomped on his chest once more before backing away.

"Stay down Britain," she warned as the man curled around his hurt chest and turned to his side. "You'll only make things worse for my son."

"You leave *my* son alone," he growled as he tried to sit up with trembling arms. He glared up at her, baring his now larger fangs as he grabbed his cane to help him stand.

Noticing his slow transformation into more beast-like features, Haud backed up and held up her hand, a faint purple shimmering aura surrounded it as she got ready for a more magiclike attack.

"You were the one who cursed him, attacked him, and tried to kill him. No *mother* would ever do that."

Haud lunged at him again, raising her fist for a punch. Britain bent down, grabbed her by her sides, jumped into the air, and threw her down. She hit the snow hard, her wings acting as a cushion. Unfortunately, they absorbed the force of the fall and a loud crack was heard from it.

She screamed, turning into a painful wale.

Britain hadn't realized how high he had jumped until he haphazardly landed on the longhouse's roof. He fell to his rump and looked around in shock, then to the ground. He hadn't done that before.

In the distance, he managed to spot a small group of warriors fighting off what looked like Australia and Russia. America's limp body was on the ground near the woods, being guarded by the two. As strong as they were, they were quickly being overrun.

Britain looked to the ground, knowing he had to get to his sons and Russia fast. He saw Haud being comforted by one of the guards they had restrained and saw the other one just as he released an arrow from his bow.

The arrow flew up to Britain, hitting his shoulder with a painful thud. He yelled, falling onto his back just as two more arrows flew over him. He hasn't died for centuries and he wasn't going to ruin

that streak now.

He took a deep breath and jumped to his feet, grabbed his dropped cane, and quickly ran across the roof to the end nearest the others. Once he got to the edge he jumped from the ledge to a hut close to him. An arrow landed near his feet and he jumped away, landing on the snow. He stumbled for a few paces before running to the sounds of the other fight.

"Don't move please, it's broken," Navajo said as he tried to quickly bandage Haud's wing. Tears streamed from her eyes, and through a blurry vision, she watched the small dark blue figure of Britain grow further and further away.

"No, I have to stop him. The idiot doesn't know what he's doing," Haud stood, holding her side that felt as if a fire poker had been stabbed into her back. Adrenaline was coursing through her veins and she knew in a moment she could ignore it better. She wiped away her tears and started running after Britain.

Navajo called after her, grabbing the knife that he had used to cut him and the other guard free, and started to run to try and stop her.

It was a mess.  Russia was trying to hold back three warriors as Aussie was holding off his own while trying to pull America into the woods. They had managed to gain two inches of running away and that was looking to be all they were going to get.

Using the dull end of a spear, Russia knocked one of the warriors to the ground. That got his arm too close to another's blade and he was stabbed by it, the cut being worse in length than depth.

He yelled, instinctively letting go of the spear with that hand and subsequently getting it easily knocked from the other. His only weapon hit the ground at his feet and the sharp end of another's was already at his face before he could reach his.

"Fuck, Aussie, try to grab America and run," Russia yelled, keeping his eyes on the warrior with the spear pointed at him. They all had their faces painted so no way to tell by flags. He thought he recognized one of the warriors as Powhatan by face shape, hair, and

build but he wasn't going to bet their small conversation would mean anything to him now.

"Trying mate," Aussie yelled struggling to do as Russia said as he kicked at a warrior holding a small blade. He held America half up by his arms, his limp body in a hard-to-grab-on-to-coat being absolutely no help.

Russia stumbled back, almost tripping on the snow. He and Aussie were cornered he realized. Kaz and Zee had a headstart and were already somewhere in the woods. They had at least three other warriors trailing them but he knew Kaz could handle it.

The guard holding the spear jerked it closer to him, causing Russia to jump back to not get impaled. His boat slipped on the snow under him and he landed on his side. He tried to pull himself back as the three other warriors started getting closer to him, all with their own weapons trained on Russia.

To his surprise, the one holding the spear looked to have thrown his weapon to the side. Everyone paused unexpectedly, even the warrior who had thrown the spear.

Without thinking about it more, Russia grabbed it and scrambled to his feet.

Just as he did, Britain dropped out of what he could only guess was the sky, and landed between him and the warriors.

"Go," Britain growled, his voice deep and like gravel. Russia ran to Aussie, getting between him and his attackers. Now able to focus on it, Australia successfully picked up America and threw him over his shoulder.

"I got him, lets go!" Aussie yelled turning and running into the woods. The snow was hard to run in and he tried to step in already existing steps, but he knew the deeper into the woods he got the lower the snow was. He would be fine until then.

Russia looked at Britain again before following after Aussie. He had never seen him in such a state, messy hair, ripped clothes, a fucking

arrow in his shoulder, red pointed scale-covered ears, with similar claws ripping through his gloves. Even his eyes. Glowing green with slit-like pupils.

What even is this family? It was surprising that Australia so seemed to be the most normal one.

The warriors tried to run past Britain but he quickly pushed them all back. He swung with his cane, clawed, and kicked, even coming close to biting one's arm. He kept his stance lowered to rhe ground, his eyes trained on the warriors, studying their stances and reacting just as they did. His breathing was heavy, his exhales coming out as low threatening growls.

"Stay back!" Britain snapped, raising his hand just as one warrior tried to take a step forward.

"Britain!"

The warriors turned and moved out of the way when they saw Haud. She stood, leaning forward slightly and holding her shoulder with the obvious badly injured wing. Her eyes glowed a bright purple and her hair started to sway around along with loose parts of her clothes. She glared at him and she raised her hand, summoning a glowing bow to her hand.

"You know not of the forces you are fighting with, nor do you know of the kind you have," Haud let go of her hurt shoulder and held it next to the bow, pulling back and creating an arrow as she did. "Surrender to us and let us do what we must or else suffer a similar fate."

Britain growled. This was the woman who had brought his son lifetimes of pain, she was the reason for a history of demonizing, suffering and death.

"Leave. My. Son. Alone."

"So be it," Haud released the arrow.

Britain swung his hand up, grabbing it out of the air. The stone point was held inches from his head, and slowly lowered it to look

at Haud. Her expressions hadn't wavered and the other warriors along with the two guards took a few steps away.

He squeezed his hand, the arrow dissolving into nothingness with the only trace of it a few purple sparkles in the air where it had been.

"I said," Britain took a step towards them. "LEAVE. MY. SON. ALONE!!!"

As he screeched, he felt his rage burn inside of his chest and through his throat. He held his eyes shut tight from the force and only realized it when he felt himself being pushed back.

He cut off his own scream and opened his eyes. Nothing was pushing him, but when he looked up at the ones he was fighting he was stunned. The warriors had fallen down, all of them groaning in pain. Haud was even on the ground, barely holding herself on her knees. Her wings were curled around her, the black feathers scorched and steaming. A few sparks were dotted on them, what looked like small flames sizzling out. Her face was contorted in pain, and she barely look up at him before she too collapsed onto her stomach.

All around them, almost in a path that lead right to him, were scorch marks. The snow had melted leaving the earth and dead grass to turn black with ash. A few flames danced before turning to smoke by the surrounding snow.

Without thinking, Britain holding his cane close to his chest, turn and ran into the woods after his kids.

**I'm aliiiIIIIIIIiive. I apologize for the like nine-month gap, life, and shit ya know. I will try to not take so long to upload, but I can't make any promises**.

**And no I will not say what Canada and America had said. It's a secret and if anyone figures that out shhhhhhhhhhh.**

**Ësgöge'ae' comrades**

**~Galaxy**

# Overdue Explanation

**This one isn't as long but I'm sick. So sorry if there are any mistakes. At least it didn't take me 9 months lmao**

**Narrator's POV**

Having Britain in his house again was. . . interesting.

Soviet stood in the corner of the living room and watched while his son Russia and one of Britain's own helped his wounds. An arrow in the shoulder wasn't the worst thing that old man had ever gotten, but Soviet wasn't thinking about that.

"What is happening to you?"

The question he asked went unheard but by now he was used to it. He only talked to help him think, help fill the silence when he was alone. And a small part of him hoped he would be heard.

Soviet looked closely at Britain's ears, something he and many others have seen. It wasn't exactly something he kept locked up tight, unlike what was happening to America. Those by themselves weren't too interesting, many countries had similar features such as horns, tails, and, for a few, wings. With the exception of wings, those features aren't too interesting. Whatever Britain had, or he assumed had, he had only read about decades ago. But he didn't have enough information yet.

Kazakhstan came into the room and Soviet noticed how tired he looked. He had been upstairs staying with America and Canada, most likely making sure they were okay, ever since they got back home. He wasn't used to seeing his sunshine child looking so glum but then again, this wasn't a situation they were used to. Not fully, anyway. He had taught them how to handle being kidnapped and tortured so he knew they could handle whatever those tribes could have done to them. They had done well, even if Russia made the mistake of grabbing one of the captor's weapons. Yes, he knew he

cares for America but he should know that his safety comes first. He would've understood if it was for Kaz's safety but either way, they are all back home and safe.

New Zealand moved over on the couch so Kaz could sit and he did so silently.

It was so quiet in the house that Soviet was half certain that they all would be able to hear him if he did talk. He would have been holding his breath if he had any. The only sounds were the five moving and the occasional sharp intake of air from Britain as he winced in pain.

"Hmm," Soviet hummed out loud and walked around the couch. Australia was the one applying the bandage to Britain while Russia held the first aid kit. He had taken off his jacket and unbuttoned his shirt enough just to expose the injured shoulder. It had bloodstains around the ripped fabric where the arrow had pierced through. They had cut the stone-tipped arrow off before pulling it out, and Britain's cry of pain when that happened was the most noise anyone of them had made so far.

As bad as the situation was, it was still nice to hear that. Karma, Soviet thought. Of course, he was one to talk.

"You should see the doctor old man," Soviet said walking through the couch and standing in front of Britain. "Would hate for that to ruin your arm. But, hearing what you did to that woman's wing, it would be an eye for an eye."

Of course, Britain didn't answer. But that woman, Huad, had recognized Britain and vice versa. They clearly didn't like each other. Something about her had felt familiar to Soviet, too. Perhaps in a memory too faint to even understand.

"I'm sorry you boys got wrapped in that," Britain spoke, breaking through the silence that had consumed the atmosphere since they returned home. He had said that while avoiding eye contact with everyone, so to clarify he looked to Russia and Kaz.

"This was family matters, you didn't need to be involved."

"And yet they were," Soviet argued back.

"Are they okay?" Kaz asked looking up towards the ceiling. Both America and Canada were placed in the guest bedroom, where they laid there as silent and motionless as they have been since they collapsed.

"Yeah, father, what's happening?" New Zealand spoke up, Britain avoiding eye contact with them.

His question went unanswered for a moment before quietly, Britain responded, "I. . . don't know. What they described happened, I don't understand it. It mustn't be anything good."

"That was obvious," Soviet scoffed and walk away to go pace around where he wouldn't walk through anybody. "You know, you're lucky my kids were there, otherwise you and your sons would be at the wrong end of a spear by now."

It was Russia and Kaz who had the rendezvous point already planned in case things went south. He knew they would be fine he heard them saying the coded message. They never had a dog, much less one named "Spot". But no one else knew that.

He only wished they had changed the location of the meeting place. It had been one of the entrances of his bunker that had been constructed during the mist of the cold war. It was heavily fortified and had supplies to last him and his kids decades if they needed, plus was directly connected to his house. It was secret, although everyone assumed Soviet had one. They just didn't know where and no one asked for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, Britain and his two sons now knew.

"I know I'm not in any position to make a request, but I would prefer that none of this got out." Britain rose to his feet and pulled his shirt over his shoulder to cover his wound. "For their sake."

"Russia," Soviet placed his hand on his mentioned son's shoulder. "Make sure they don't tell anyone about the bunker. It was supposed to be secret for a reason."

Russia, getting the sudden thought in his head about the bunker, stood, turned to Britain, and held out his hand, "as long as you don't tell anyone about my father's bunker."

Britain took his hand, lucky that his injury was on his left. "Of course."

"Good, but don't trust him yet," Soviet said, his hand still resting on his son's shoulder. "We don't know what this man is hiding."

With those thoughts in mind, Russia let go of Britain's hand. He wanted to ask, pry into what he knew so that way he knew how to help America, who as far as Britain knew was just his friend. But, he held his tongue. What's to stop him from lying, he didn't want anyone to know about America and Canada's issues. He wouldn't answer any questions, and if he did, without America to confirm, he wouldn't know if he could trust them.

Soviet had begun to learn that he could sort of influence the actions of Russia. It took some practice and some energy out of him which had to be careful with. He had completely drained himself when trying to keep Russia safe from Haud when everyone was panicking about America and Canada arriving at their camp.

It took him a while to come back and he barely had enough energy to fling that tribe's spear from his hand.

Since then he's only had enough strength to whisper suggestions to Russia. That seemed relatively low effort. But something that intrigued him was that Haud when sitting by that fire had made almost direct eye contact with him.

"Must be draining," she had said.

For him? Not so much. But admittedly, Russia did seem to have been steadily declining in strength. Mentally it felt more like. Perfectly in line with the increased ease of influencing Russia's thoughts.

"Perhaps I should keep that in check," Soviet sat down in an empty spot on the couch. "I don't want to leave him weak."

Everyone was waiting for France to arrive since Britain had called her to pick them all up. Australia was to drive Canada's truck home when they all got ready to leave. It was considered for a moment that they would just pile into the truck but it was quickly dismissed. They were no clowns with a car, they all couldn't fit.

When France did arrive, she very much nearly kicked down the door.

"Were's my boys," she yelled, pushing past Kaz who had let her in. She was quickly led upstairs where she cried seeing them the way they were. Messy and unkempt with some bruises and black stains on their clothes and skin. France muttered under her breath and kissed the two on their foreheads. She worked on fixing their clothes and cleaning their faces the best she could.

While she did that everyone filled her in on what happened. France knew next to nothing about Haud, so the mention of another mother to one of her sons made her uneasy. Especially if she was the reason for these curses. She understood the situation was more complicated and it wasn't easy to condemn and defend either side. But still, the resentment for such a decision swayed who she viewed as the bad guy.

Soviet walked around everyone, not wishing to walk through them. It felt just as weird for him as it did for them. He guessed at least.

He looked down at America and frowned. Seeing him lying there almost lifeless. He hated the memory.

After a little while, they managed to put America and Canada into the back of France's vehicle. Russia and Kaz helped the best they could, getting everyone situated. Zee and Aussie were accepting of their help, France being uncertain, but Britain uncomfortable. At least he didn't say anything.

"Britain," Russia stopped the man before he could get in the passenger seat. The older country hesitated before turning to look at him.

"They're not bad people."

Britain nodded. "They aren't our allies for a reason, son. Good people can feud, too. Just as bad ones."

With that, he got into the seat next to France and shut the door.

The two brothers stayed by the road and watched the car drive away. It was when it was no longer in sight did they go back inside.

Kaz decided to collapse onto the couch and said he would just fall asleep there despite it being late in the afternoon. He stretched his wings out, one laying on the floor and the other suspended in the air. Russia would've helped him to his room, but as soon as he sat down on the opposite couch he realized he would definitely not be getting back up.

Instead, he got comfortable and shut his eyes.

Sleeping on the couch for both of them it seemed, Soviet thought.

"Dad would kill me for letting them in that bunker."

"Yes. And for dating America," Kaz responded with his face resting on a pillow.

"Wait what?" Both Russia and Soviet asked.

"You know about that?" Russia looked over at his brother who just slightly turned his head in his direction.

"You two are dating now?" Soviet looked at Russia confused. They just had a fight, what happened while he was out? When he came back from whatever void he went into, Russia was telling stories to kids.

"Ha, knew it." Kaz laughed to himself.

Russia scoffed, disappointed that he easily fell for that. "Whatever. Just don't tell anyone. I'm not ready for others to know."

"Don't worry, Bel, Ukraine, and Armenia already think you are."

"Da, I caught onto that," Russia blinked and sat up. "Wait a minute,

where are they?"

Kaz frowned and turned to face away from Russia. "Now you notice."

"What?"

"Nothing, I'm tired. Let me sleep."

Russia furrowed his brow in confusion. What did he mean? Of course, he would notice. It took him a moment with everything that had happened, but still, he did. He knew Ukraine was usually off with Canada, but Belarus was usually home.

"Rest now son, worry about the others when you wake," Soviet said, placing his hand on Russia's shoulder. He watched as his eyes blinked and he struggled to keep them open. Slowly, he laid down and quickly allowed sleep to overcome him.

Okay, *now* he'll try to stop doing that.

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It was a surprise when America woke up in his room. His body ached, his throat hurt and his vision was blurry. The only confirmation that he had that everything that happened wasn't a dream was the small braid he had in his hair.

He stumbled out of bed and hurried out of his room, running right into Britain. He had been standing outside his door since he woke that morning. He was dressed, with no sign of any fight visible on him. Then again, he was in a newer-looking suit with white gloves leaving his face essentially the only part of him not covered. He even dorn a brand new top hat.

America stumbled back and almost fell but Britain caught him and helped him steady himself.

"I would advise against walking for a while, son," Britain cautioned and helped America limp to his bed. He was too tired and in pain to argue this time. He allowed his father to help him settle into bed but stayed sitting up.
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"Wha," America tried to say but his voice stopped working almost as soon as he tried. Not even bothering, he raised his shaky hands and signed, "What happened?"

Britain explained his episode as it was told to him, what he saw when he and the others arrived at the camp, how they fought and Russia and Kaz lead them back to their house. Britain intentionally left out a few parts, the ones that regarded him and the new development that he planned to talk to Wales about.

America wanted to angrily yell, ask Britain what he knew about his past lives, how he died, who everyone was, how, what, and why. Instead, he quickly signed out his rambles that Britain struggled to keep up with.

"Did you know about the tribes? All those people I had hurt, I can't remember most of that, what happened? What do you know? What aren't you telling me?"

"America- wait, slow down."

"Those tribes had been my family, they raised me why didn't you tell me that? What about Haud? My mom, she took care of me when you didn't, why didn't you tell me about her?"

"America, please," Britain grabbed his son's hand and stopped him. "One at a time."

"Why didn't you tell me about those tribes."

Britain sighed, taking off his hat and setting it down next to him. Poking through his smoothed hair were his red dragon ears half flattened against his head.

"I'll be honest with you, son. I don't know much about your past, as you know I wasn't there for a lot of it."

America nodded.

"Since you claimed your independence, I tried to stay out of your way. To allow you to be your own country, which I realize now didn't mean I had to completely cut you off.

"I admit, I wasn't a good person then. Everyone made questionable choices, there were very few exceptions. You hadn't been that, and made horrible decisions that hurt others."

Britain paused for a moment, thinking about his response.

"I know what it's like to carry that weight, to have that desire to forget that you were ever able to commit such heinous things. When you died, it was assumed you would be able to do that. However, that was not the case. When you died, you still remembered everything as if you never had."

"That's normal right?" America asked in signed language. He remembered what Haud had said about bringing him back to life, memories and all. "Rare, but it just happens sometimes?"

"Everyone only thinks that because of you," Britain explained. "As far as I'm aware, there has been no other case of that happening to anyone else, not naturally at least."

The small chuckle that came from the older country was a surprise. "When it came to you and death, you two seemed closer than anyone else I've ever known."

"What do you mean?"

"You to this date have died more than anyone I've ever known. The longest-lasting countries may have died once or twice, even I have died once. But you? Four to my count, but heavens knows if there was more."

America nodded, deciding not to correct the number and instead just listen. This was the most he has gotten out of his father in what felt like his entire life.

"Apologies, I did not mean to get off-topic. My point was, that you remembered after death and you desperately wished for the opposite. You were in such denial, frankly to the point you didn't want to believe those tribes existed. All so you could go on with your days and never know you had done anything to those tribes. I wanted to help you, and my chance came when Soviet brought you

to me.

"Up until then, I felt as if it were best that I stayed away. You were happy with who you were and you were safer. I'm happy I kept my distance then, even if I do regret it. As you know, during the first World War, German Empie shot and killed you. Caught in the crossfires of war you weren't supposed to be a part of, and one you didn't even wish to be. I had trusted Russian Empire with your safety and he had failed you."

A familiar twinge of pain went through his chest at the mention of that country's name. He didn't speak still and rubbed his chest when it started to ache.

"Seeing you as I had, lifeless and bloodstained, I vowed to myself that I would do everything that I could to protect you. I wanted to be a better father, be involved in your life, and do everything I could to make sure that never happened again. Even if it meant keeping your past away from you, being overly strict, and keeping you here in my house.

"I didn't want history to keep repeating."

"This life," America quickly signed. "My life, me. At the very start, tell me. Did I remember anything, did I say anything?"

"Im not surprised you don't remember, I assumed you didn't," Britain rubbed his hurt shoulder, trying to move his hand to make sure it still functions correctly. "You were haunted by figures in your nightmares, going into rambles in languages I didn't understand. You were disturbed by something but you couldn't fully explain it. When you managed to tell me what you remembered I was surprised you could remember any of that. The war at the time helped you forget, it distracted you."

America urged him to explain further, in more detail, to tell him everything he knew. He needed to know.

"Well, when you finally woke after being shot, I was more than relieved to know it wasn't your last death. Of course, it did take me some time to get used to your eyes."

"I thought you knew about my eyes?" America asked with his hands.

"I hadn't imagined you still had them," Britain admitted. "The first time I had ever seen them, Holy Rome thought you were possessed by a demon and had killed you to rid the demon from your body."

America nodded, knowing about that. He had heard the stories, knowing how they spoke to the paranoia of the paranormal of the time. He always liked to think that that was the reason for his skepticism.

"There was very little anyone could do to stop Holy Rome, but I should have tried harder. Everyone should have tried harder and realized how daft we all were, but I suppose that was just the times."

"Yeah, still not possessed," America signed. And the joke was on Holy Rome, cause guess who is still around today.

"Your mask, the one you wore to cover your eyes, it was told to us that the evil that had left your body had left your eyes scared and sensitive to the light, so you had to wear a mask or something to cover them. We believed it."

"I thought you knew about them before."

"I only acted like I did because you were scared," Britain admitted, avoiding America's line of sight. "I didn’t let you know how scared I was because that would only make you fear even more. If I acted brave for you, you wouldn’t have had to worry as much. And it worked, but. . ."

America than didn't take it seriously when he should've. He fought against Britain's rules and stayed only because his siblings asked. He had lived at his home for a while, up until his episodes started to get worse and he needed someone to watch him. There were hills and valleys it seemed, where it felt like he was getting a bit better and life could feel normal. Those valleys though would take that hope away quick.

This was the worst valley so far, America thought. In terms of his

curse that was. Even during the Great Depression, his curse wasn't this bad.

It was around then, or just earlier in his life in general, that America remembered times when he and Britain could simply just talk. Talk about what was happening, trying to make plans for future events, trying to reinstate a more personal relationship. What he remembered about Britain made it a rocky start but they still managed to talk as equals. Not one trying to command the other, nothing like that.

This was the first real conversation they seemed to have since he moved in with them. He had missed this a lot.

They talked more, Britain doing all of the actual speakings while America signed. He explained what had happened with the natives, sharing more of the happier memories at first. He still avoided the bad thoughts and subjects, more conscious of their presence but not ready to think about those just yet. Which, proved his dad right but he wouldn't admit that out loud just yet.

Instead, he did bring up what Haud had told him. That she personally was the reason for the curse, that she has tried and failed to remove it.

"She told you this herself?"

America nodded.

"Unfortunately, we can't just go off of her word. She could easily be lying, trying to give you the answers you want just to lure you into some kind of trap."

"I don't know, she looked like she was telling the truth."

Britain exhaled and simply nodded. He knew if he pressed harder to have him believe what he was saying, it would go the opposite. He had countless examples of such behavior, he didn't know why it clicked in his head now.

"Be careful, son," he warned. "I'd advise against trusting them for now, they are the ones who did this to you, after all."

America fought the urge to object. He knew he couldn't trust them, even if they seemed to have welcomed him with open arms. With what had happened recently and on Halloween, everything felt off. Haud had been like a mother to him, he had memories of them together and like a family. She didn't seem capable of placing such a curse. But of course, to her America didn't seem capable of such violence. If she was acting out of fear, anger, or whatever, who knows if she's still capable of doing the same. Or worse.

"Do you remember anything from this recent episode?"

America looked up at Britain, being torn from his thoughts. He shook his head no. He didn't remember anything. Just the fact that he started to worry and panic about something and then blackout.

"Where's Canada?" He signed quickly, looking around for some sign of his brother. What he expected to see in his room he didn't know but he need to know where he was. "Russia, Kazakhstan, they were with me, where are they?"

"America, America," Britain grabbed his hands and stopped him. "They are okay. Canada is in his room, he's still asleep. The other two are at their home."

He pulled his hands free and asked, "can I see Canada? Please, I can walk fine."

"No, you can't, don't lie to yourself." Britain stood and grabbed his hat, carefully placing it on his head. "I'll see if he is awake, please don't get up and hurt yourself more."

America grumbled, frowning and looking over at his nightstand. His phone was there plugged in to charge, along with his jacket half hanging off the corner. He had been pushing it when he went to the camp with Canada and Kaz, and no doubt Australia would be looking for revenge for locking his phone in his bathroom.

"When I can walk, can I go see Russia?"

"It's not safe, not after what had just happened."

"Well, then can Russia come over? I'll still be safe that way."

"America, I don’t know," Britain stood near the door looking back just to see what he was trying to say. Despite that, he still reached out for the knob.

"Dad, why are you so against him?" America made a face to match his tone. "What has he done?"

He watched as his father froze, his hand just inches away from the doorknob. His eyes darted to the ground and he stayed quiet. America blinked, a bit confused by that reaction. He raised his hands to question further but was halted.

"Yes, you're friend can come over. No sense in trying to hide all of this from him I suppose," Britain said straightening himself out. "Just remember son, chose your friends wisely. Not everyone has good intentions in mind."

America thought about correcting the friend part of that but decided maybe now wasn't the best time. Plus, Britain wasn't on the list of people Russia was okay with knowing. He needed to come out on his own terms.

"Thanks," America said, straining his voice as he did. Britain nodded, quickly scolded him for talking, then left to check on Canada.

America grabbed his phone and quickly messaged Russia, absentmindedly scrolling up to see his previous messages that were all left unopened. He better answer this time, he thought. They were no longer fighting, he should get a response.

A few minutes later he did. Russia said he would come over after America explained that his dad said he was okay. It was a surprise to the both of them but who was going to look a gift horse in the mouth.

As America waited for Russia to arrive, Britain knocked on Canada's door.

"Canada?" He asked, slowly opening the door to try and peek inside. Just as he had, the door was pushed back and slammed closed.

Britain tore his hand away and stumbled back in shock.

"Canada? What- are you alright?" He yelled, trying the door again. The knob didn't turn, either Canada was holding it still or he had locked it.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm fine, I just. Just go away!" Came his voice from the other side of the door.

"At least let me see you, I-"

"No!" Canada yelled, catching Britain off guard once more. "No, please you can't."

He swallowed and looked around and down the hallway. France would be able to talk him into opening the door but she and Zee had gone to get a wheelchair to help America at least move around the house on his own.

"Son, what is wrong?"

"I don't want to talk about it, please just leave me alone."

Britain uneasily adjusted his sleeves and gloves and looked around unsure what to do. Allow them their space, he told himself. This is all very traumatic you put pressure on them it'll make things worse.

"Okay. I'll be back later with breakfast," Britain said before walking away.

Inside, Canada watched his shadow from underneath walk away and he listened to him go down the hallway. He exhaled deeply, not even realizing he had been holding his breath, and let go of the door handle.

He leaned against the door, turning so his back was pressed against it, and slid to the floor. He pulled his legs to his chest and buried his face, curling up as tightly as he could. His entire body trembled as tears flooded down his cheeks, resuming their previous place before Britain had knocked.

The room was dark, curtains covered all the windows. Canada

didn't want to see the outside world or even risk seeing his reflection in the glass.

At that thought, he lifted his head just enough to peek out towards his bathroom. He had left the door ajar and the soft glow from his salt rock lamp changed in color, barely lighting up the room. The red light brought out the shadows and was barely seen in the shards of glass that littered the floor. When it transitioned to a blue, the dark spots on the floor became visible. Splotches of blood covered some of the glass, creating a trail that lead right to wear Canada had been sitting a moment before. His foot ached from the open cut on it. It wasn't too serious, not that it even mattered.

He had worse things to worry about now.

Too many things are going on now. Why? Just why? He had talked to the tribes, talked to the ones that he had hurt. He did what they wanted, he agreed to help them. Why did it get worse?

Canada angrily yelled, grabbing the nearest thing–a small hanging shelf that held some trinkets– tearing it from its perch and throwing it across the room. It hit his tv, the screen shattering and falling to the floor on top of the broken shelf.

Tears blurred his vision and he whipped those away just as they had.

He had a similar outburst and had already trashed his room. There wasn't much of a difference now with his TV knocked over, just something else broken on his floor. He had knocked over his desk, thrown papers and everything else he could on the ground, kicked over his nightstand, and ripped anything decorative that held his reflection off the wall.

Stepping over broken glass, he crawled onto his bed and grabbed one of his pillows to hold. He knew trashing his room didn't help anyone, all it did was create more problems for him later when he had to clean it up. He didn't even know why he had done that, he didn't like getting angry, and he didn't like making a mess. He actually really liked those things he broke. Why did he break them?

He sobbed into his pillow, trying to silence himself the best he could. Mexico had given him that mirror. They had painted it together, drawing funny mustaches onto the glass as a joke. And he shattered it. Why did he do that? He loved that mirror. On that shelf, the small things he collected he loved those too. Why did he throw those like they were nothing to him?

Why was he doing this? What right did he have to behave in such a manner?

Canada sniffled and sat up, looking around at the mess he had made. Why had he done all of that? It didn't make him feel better.

He looked to the broken mirror frame that was partially exposed under his thrown about clothes.

Why were both of his eyes black?

**I love writing characters' descent into madness. I'm not saying that's what's happening here but I am saying I love doing that.**

**Anyways till next time guys gals and nonbinary comrades,**

**Ësgöge'ae'**

**~Galaxy**

# A/N

Hey suddenly got really busy gonna be on a hiatus for a little bit

# Fluff With a Dash of Angst

**Warning, I briefly spell-checked this. I'm relying on a very glitchy Grammarly. Watch this have the least amount of mistakes tho.**

**Narrator's POV**

"Stop it don't you dare!"

America grabbed the wheels of his new wheelchair and stopped it at the edge of the stairs. He looked down at the marble steps where the only cushioning would be the thin decorative carpet.

"Vroom vroom motherfuckers," America whispered as he pushed forward.

"Gotcha!"

New Zealand grabbed the back handles of the wheelchair just in time to pull him away from the stairs. He sighed and turned the complaining country around.

"Zeeeeeeee," America whined, his voice quiet and strained. "I want to go downstairs."

"You have to wait, we don't have a way for you to go down the stairs right now, dumbass."

"Yes, you do. Push me down them, you coward."

"You know what I just might."

Despite saying that, Zee continued to walk America to his room. When their mom and he went shopping for a wheelchair for America, they considered getting a motorized one. But, they realized that would lead to more issues when America tried to compensate for his lack of walking with more wheelchair-related hijinks. So, a simple handheld that way they could have some way

to physically stop him from doing something stupid.

Like trying to go down the stairs.

"Maybe I should try it backward. It worked for that old lady in Alvin and the Chipmunks."

"She ended up in the hospital."

"So? She still made it to the bottom of rhe stairs."

Zee sighed and wheeled him back into his room. He was supposed to stay there for now anyway. Just until they found a better way for him to properly move around. Australia offered to give him a piggyback ride down the stairs when he needed but he declined. Said something about his dignity like he has any of that left.

"Maybe we should take this as a sign to get a slide next to the stairs."

"Yeah, you'd sooner convince dad to let you bring your birds back."

America sighed and grabbed the wheels and pushed himself to the bedside. Zee let him go and watched him make sure he didn't hurt himself. He could walk slightly, but not well enough to conquer stairs.

To prove his point, America struggled to stand for a moment, his arms shaking as he pushed his body up. He managed to get on his feet for two seconds before collapsing onto his bed. He hated this. He hated this a lot.

"You know, Russia should—" he coughed a few times, tears forming in the corners of his eyes "—he should be here soon. If you want you can check up on Canada. He needs way more help than me, anyway."

"I will, but you both need help," Zee said, grabbing a glass of water and handing it to America. "You more physically than him. He's not bedridden like you."

America didn't respond and just drank from the glass. Out of the

two of them, America felt like Canada was the best. He was nicer, seemed happy wherever he was, and everyone in the family let him do his own thing. He wasn't bothered, they just trusted him to not fuck up.

He was the better sibling, essentially.

So what tripped him up was how he got wound up in this curse too. It made sense if it was stuff in the past, Canada was a little monster then. A lot of countries where. It's easy to condemn the actions of the past through the lens of the present. Or maybe that's just an excuse to be rid of the consequences.

But there should be no way Canada could be getting worse. He met with those tribes just as he did. They seemed more lenient and less focused on him, so they didn't see him as much as a threat as they had America. So why were both of his eyes black?

New Zealand offered to go downstairs to grab food if America needed it, or anything else. He said he was fine. And so, having nothing else left to do, he went to go to Canada's room.

Canada hadn't moved much. He stayed in his bed, either scrolling on his phone or just sleeping. It would take him a little bit to get a new TV, one he insisted he'd pay himself, so with his curtains drawn it was pretty much dark in his room. The glass was all picked up, along with everything he had thrown about. They were just set aside, for now, he would reorganize everything later.

It had taken everyone a moment to understand what was going on. When they heard loud crashing noises everyone went to America. Quickly after finding him just as confused as the others, they checked on Canada. Thats when they found him in the dark crying with his room trashed.

It was a shock for sure, Canada didn't normally lash out like that. He was too nervous to spill something easy to clean, much less rival a tornado in destruction. Of course, when they saw his eyes, that became the last thing they cared about.

"Canada?" Zee asked, knocking on the door. He opened it slightly,

hoping to see Canada happy and smiling like he normally was. Instead, he barely was acknowledged.

"Did you need anything? Dad is out to visit Wales right now, so," his voice trailed off until he was just silently standing in the doorway. Awkwardly, he shifted on his feet and waited for some kind of response.

He didn't get one.

"Can?" Zee walked over to his bed and leaned over to see if he was awake or not. He shook his shoulder slightly and Canada responded by groaning and turning to his side facing Zee. His eyes were shut and he looked as if he had been sleeping.

"Yeah?" He mumbled out, yawning afterward.

Relieved slightly, Zee smiled. "Just checking on you, thats all. Dad left to visit Wales. He said he would be back later. Did you need anything?"

Canada shook his head. "No, but thank you."

"Anytime," Zee said, patting Canada's messy hair. "I'll be downstairs for a bit, but I'll be back to check on you two again."

Canada nodded, squinting his eyes open just slightly to watch Zee leave his room. When he left and he heard the door click shut, thats when he opened his eyes fully and sat up.

He felt bad for lying, even if his "lie" was just him pretending to be asleep. He hadn't been, he was lying still and quiet and hoping Zee would just leave. He just didn't want to admit to him that he had been crying again. It was a lot easier to just pretend instead of having them worry about him more after all.

Besides, it was America who was in the wheelchair. He was just sad, he would be fine.

~~~~~~~~~

"So, why didn't you let America fall down the stairs?"
~~~~~~~~~

"I don't know, I really should've. Maybe then he would know not to do it."

Australia snickered, picking up a bagel. "Highly doubt that. He would just do it again and you know it."

The pair were in the kitchen to get something to eat for lunch. Those two were closer to each other than to America or Canada, and not just in the literal sense. They got along with the northern countries, but they usually were swept up in some kind of frenzy that it was hard to relate to. Plus, Canada and America were closer to each other than them, too. It wasn't a problem, sometimes things just happened. Besides, Zee would rather spend time with Australia. Or Canada. He was generally calmer and liked the simple stuff.

Australia on the other hand loved to fuck around and find out. And America did, too, so naturally, they were idiots when left alone together. If either of them had any brain cells, they both lose them every time they hung out.

Probably why Zee was put in charge whenever France and Britain were gone. France had to meet with UN for some important stuff, whatever it was had to involve Canada and America, and as mentioned Britain was with Wales. Probably for Canada and America, too.

It was hard not to feel like a side character in their family.

Australia tossed the bagel in the air and it landed on Zee's horn, almost like a game of ring toss.

"Fuck yeah!"

"I hate you," Zee grumbled, forgetting his thoughts, and turned to look at Australia. He had to tilt his head to the side to pull off the bagel, which he did with ease, used to this by now.

Now, a responsible country would simply scold him and move on. And Zee was a responsible country.

However, he was also Australia's sibling.

"Eat shit," he threw the bagel back at Aussie, hitting him in the forehead.

"Ow, cunt."

"Kangaroo fucker."

"Oi! I'm about to fuck you up in a second."

Zee burst out laughing, leaning over the counter. "One missing word and that would've sounded so bad."

"Imma stab you."

"No, you won't," Zee stuck out his tongue and, perhaps foolishly, turned his back to the Australian. "Besides, we got things to do."

"Whatever," Aussie thought about throwing something at him again or hitting the back of his knees so he'd fall, but for now decided against it. For now.

After a couple of minutes, they heard a knock at the door. Britain had said to expect Russia to stop by for America. When he arrived he was not to leave the house until Britain came back, and he was to be checked up on to make sure he wasn't doing anything he wasn't supposed to.

"America's upstairs," Zee said, leading Russia to the grand staircase. It had been a bit since he's been here, the last time was to drop off America after that thing that happened at that abandoned palace. Compared to that, Britain's house was small. Calling it a simple house seemed to undersell it though, it was a fucking mansion.

"Thank you," Russia said nodding his head at New Zealand. "Belarus says hi, and she wants to know if you two are still going to hang out this weekend."

"Of yeah, of course. As long as nothing comes up," Zee gestured to America's door, and Russia nodded, understanding what he meant.

Russia knocked on America's door and walked in.

"Ruski!" America exclaimed with a smile before it quickly turned into a cough. Russia closed the door and quickly walked to him, sitting on the edge of the bed and resting his hand on his back.

"Im alright, I promise. It just hurts to talk, you know?"

Russia nodded and suggested, "then don't. Rest, I get water."

"It's fine, I'll just have to whisper for a bit."

Nevertheless, Russia suggested they watch TV or something that way America would be distracted and not have to talk so much. He agreed, happily trying to find a show that they would both like on his tv. Then America remembered that drunk Russia had requested Gravity Falls before.

Never.

America paused and looked over at Russia, who started to pick up his room a little so he could move in his wheelchair better. He had said never and now look at him. Even so, it still hurt to remember that.

"Russia?"

"Hmm?" The said country turned, holding some of America's dirty clothes.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Da."

"Why did you say never?"

Russia put the clothes in what he guessed was the dirty clothes bin and hesitated. He knew immediately what he had meant. He hated himself for even saying that and he hoped they wouldn't talk about it. But he knew they had to. Even if America could guess his response accurately.

"I was scared and stupid. I didn't know how to confront my emotions, everything was scary," Russia walked over to the bed and

sat back down. "I had made plan to help me do it, so I had some control over the situation. I drank to calm myself, and that ruined it.

"After you told me everything I did, I didn't have that control. I wanted to come out on my terms and I ruined that for myself. So I panicked."

America hugged Russia and weakly pulled him fully onto the bed where they sat across from each other. "I understand, it just hurt a lot to hear that from you. You have to understand, it fucking sucked hearing you tell me you loved me, to treat me like something more than friends then be told I'm not worth that."

"I don't mean to hurt you," Russia grabbed America's hands and held them. "I'm still scared, but I know I want this."

America smiled and nodded. "I know. I won't push you. But you know, if we're gonna keep his secret I still have to flirt with you in public. You're just gonna have to act like you don't like it~"

Russia nodded. "I know. Thats easy."

America made an offended look and dramatically tore his hand from Russia's and held his chest. "My heart. How it aches."

In response, Russia just leaned forward, grabbing both of his wrists and kissing his chest right where his heart would be.

"Is there another worry?" He asked, looking up at America who was blushing slightly.

"Yeah, just. Can we still go on dates? Like private ones, like-like a picnic by your house or dinner somewhere with like Germany and Poland. We can all double date and pretend like it's just a big hang-out if we go somewhere public."

Russia nodded, moving to sit next to America instead of across. He laid back, America doing so too and he put his arm across the other and pulled him close to him. "Kaz knows, he tricked me. Belarus I was planning on telling anyways, and Ukraine is off with Canada a lot. And I think Armenia is gay. Home is okay."

America chuckled and laid his head on Russia's chest. He smiled, very happy where he was laying. Faintly over the sounds of the TV playing, he could hear his heartbeat. It was quickened, enough just to know he was flustered by simple cuddles.

Cute.

"So, I can cuddle you and give you kisses in my room and at your house."

Russia nodded and turned his head away from America. He tried to play it off as if he was just looking around the room absentmindedly before turning back to the TV.

Wanting to be a piece of shit, America gently cupped Russia's chin and very slowly made him turn to face him. Russia tried to keep his eyes on the TV, the scene with Dipper reading in the attic playing. After all, that's what's more important right now. If he didn't focus on it, then he wouldn't be affected.

Flawless logic.

Unfortunately for him, America defies all logic.

Not wanting to be ignored, America pulled Russia into a kiss. Having no choice, Russia's eyes widened as he looked at the country in front of him. Okay, never mind fuck the gnomes, he had this.

Russia fixed his position to sit more comfortably, pulling America closer to him. America in turn tried to move but decided he had a better idea. He interrupted their kiss long enough for America to move to sit on Russia's lap, wrapping his arms around his neck. He looked at Russia, his face flushed a deep red and his previously light blue eyes slowly changing to an amber. Now he had his attention.

"Cutie," America teased, leaving a quick peck on his lips.

Russia huffed, pulling America back to kiss him again. He kept them held together, his grip still soft not wanting to hurt him more than he probably was. It felt nice, holding each other like this, Russia thought. He had been so scared, so worried, and now all those fears were gone. Of course, he was still worried about being

caught and being outed, that hadn't left him yet But right there at that moment, he was safe.

They stayed intertwined, America laying on Russia for a while going between kissing and watching the show. America just wanted to stay like that for as long as he could, locked at the lips and held so softly. But he knew they had to keep an ear out for anybody who came close to their room just in case.

"Does this amount of space between us look straight enough?" Russia asked, sitting on the far side of the bed, his back against the headboard. He looked between them, America sitting on one end of the bed did put at least a leg distance away. "Or is it too much straight?"

America laughed, "what does that mean?"

"Is this far enough to be straight, or is it too straight that we're gay again?"

"Five feet apart cause we're not gay."

"Nyet, I'll be on the floor then. Is this suspicious?" Russia moved a little closer.

"Ruski, dude, you're the only one who's going to be overanalyzing how much space is between us."

Russia still frowned, considering America could be right. America has always been somehow close to him, loving Russia's personal space. Maybe they would look less suspicious if America sprawled out a little more. But Russia didn't want to look uncomfortable with it either, he wanted to be able to show silently that he likes America and is comfortable with him, but also that he doesn't like him too much.

Maybe he is overthinking it.

"I'm just saying, all we gotta do is just not be cuddling and kissing when they walk in. We don't need to figure out our designated 'straight spots'." America tried to calm Russia's nerves. He watched with a slight smirk, silently hoping that his laidbackness would

infect his boyfriend.

Hehe. His boyfriend.

All it took was what? Being kidnapped again? Being held prisoner? Hmm.

"What is wrong?"

"Hmm?" America blinked, looking up at Russia. He was looking at him, noticeably little closer than before, with a slight twitching frown and slanted eyebrows.

"You looked sad, what were you thinking?"

America looked down and moved a little closer to rest his head on his shoulder. "I dunno. Haud I guess."

"Oh?" Russia raised a brow, keeping his response short and his thoughts to himself. He wanted to bring the situation up, and pester America with questions but he knew better. What happened was rough for all of them, and prying that out of him would be counterproductive. Especially if all he wanted was a distraction, which Russia assumed was the purpose of him being there.

He knew America would talk about it when he wanted to. And seeing how that time seemed to be now, Russia was more than willing to listen.

"I dunno how I feel about all this, everything is so confusing. She seemed so nice, so welcoming but at the same time," America coughed a few times, which helped make his point, and softened his voice. "But at the same time, it felt too loving. Like she was just ignoring everything I had done. But you can't just ignore that right? Everyone else defiantly could not stop thinking about it, you could tell right?"

Russia nodded, still choosing to stay quiet.

"But I thought that maybe I was just overthinking things, you know? But now that Canada has two completely black eyes like me, I-I don't know what to think."

Russia hadn't known that. That was very odd. They seemed to be more docile with Canada, it would seem strange that his curse worsened after they all fought like that. Maybe it was linked to whatever episode America had, that's when the change happened right? It couldn't be their fault.

Then again, they did say they had more control over Canada's curse than America's.

But what if whatever that was had infected it somehow? Can that happen with curses? He knew nothing about their magic, which means that even if he doesn't like it, he can't rule out that they did use the opportunity to worsen Canada's. It doesn't seem like they would, but Russia reminded himself they didn't know that much about them. He can't afford to assume they wouldn't do something just because they were slightly nice to him.

"I just don't know what to think. I feel like this could all be some sort of trap, but even if it is, don't I deserve it?"

"Hey," Russia pulled America closer and glanced at the door for a moment. "What happened back then, you didn't do. You personally, okay? It was a past version of you, yes, but the America you are today didn't exist at that time."

America nodded slowly, keeping his eyes lowered.

"You do have a responsibility for the actions of your past, and you should try to repair what was broken. Even if you didn't exist then, not mending the problem now only hurts more people."

"Yeah, I think I get it. If I can help I should, otherwise I'm no better than that past me. That still slightly feels like me. I dunno, Ruski, this whole thing is so confusing," America yawned, leaning over to grab his blanket. He pulled it over him and Russia, who lifted his arm so that America could lean over and lay on his chest with his arm around him.

"One step at a time," Russia kissed the top of America's head, earning a small hum with a smile from him. "Heal now, then you'll decide what to do."

America nodded, closing his eyes and getting a little bit more comfortable. It wasn't too late in the day, it had to be only around maybe 4 pm, but still, his body ached from what little movements he made throughout the day. His throat burned and with each word he spoke too loud it had been like dragging sandpaper across the already delicate muscles.

Carefully, America whispered, "as long as you're there when I do."

"Of course."

A few minutes of silence passed between them when Russia looked down at America again. His eyes were shut and his mouth was slightly agape, his chest rising and falling in a shakey rhythm. He had fallen asleep relatively easily using him as a pillow.

He deserved a break for right now, didn't he?

"люблю тебя (Love you)," Russia smiled and kissed the top of his head again before leaning back a little to keep watching the tv. He assumed he wouldn't be staying the night but he supposed it wouldn't do anyone harm. Plus, he would be damned if America woke up with him gone.

He leaned his head over to rest it on top of America's and slipped his hand under the blanket, trailing his fingers down his still arm to his hand. He intertwined their fingers, holding his hand as lightly as he could to not wake him, and keeping the fact that he even held his hand hidden.

It was around an hour later Britain returned home with France. She had finished her meeting with UN, filling in for Britain so he could speak with Wales, and had been the one to pick him up. He looked worried, but that was an expression common within their household nowadays.

"Perhaps we should all get away, even for the day, a vacation may make everyone feel better?"

"You know we can't afford that. Especially now," Britain said as they arrived home, the sky a little darker than he thought it would be.

Perhaps it was to rain again. "We don't know what's going on with them."

France nodded, parking the car. "I know. I just don't agree with UN. I know they are only trying to keep everyone safe, but should that mean locking them up? They aren't wild animals, they're our children."

"I know, I don't like it either," Britain said as they got out of the vehicle and he walked over to his wife. He offered his arm and she graciously accepted, wrapping her own around him as they started walking up to their home. "They said they would give us a little bit more time, correct?"

"Hesitantly so, yes."

"Wales believes that they may have an idea, but they would need to see America and Canada in person for it."

"Are they sure? The last time you asked them to help, even she sounded uncertain."

France grabbed the golden knocker and used it, hoping to find a normal home on the other side of it. It's been very hectic, something she should have been used to by now, but silently she dreaded the suspense.

"I'm sure. Besides, do we have any other choice?"

New Zeland opened the door, and with no sign of distress on his face, France sighed in relief. Peaceful it was then. Thank goodness.

"How was the meeting?" Zee asked, stepping aside to let them in. He took his mother's coat and hung it up for her, waiting for either the truth or false reassurance.

"It was good, everything is going to be okay," France smiled as the pair started walking towards the kitchen to retrieve dinner.

False reassurance it was then.

Britain explained when they moved to eat in the dining room that

tomorrow he would be returning to Wales with America and Canada. That left the day for the three free, so if anyone wanted to go somewhere, he encouraged it.

"Hon, didn't you say-"

"Yes, I know what I said, dear." Britain shut down the worry, dabbing the corners of his mouth with a napkin. He and France sat at the dinner table eating the slightly cooled chicken parmigiana that Aussie had made for everyone. "That was regarding the boys, but if you and the other two wanted to take a day to unwind I suggest you do so."

France nodded, looking to Zee and Aussie who stood by the counter. They had already eaten and had been waiting for any kind of information, or more accurately some kind of order they had to follow. That's what it had been lately with everyone. Taking everything as it came, following directions just so that at least something in the household went over smoothly. When was the last time they took a break as a family? Went around and did absolutely nothing productive just because they could.

"You two could use a break," France smiled, setting her fork down. Even that suggestion felt like it was just another order to follow.

"Um, I was going to visit Bel Friday, I could ask if she's free tomorrow?" Zee stammered for a second as if the mention of him visiting a friend was against the rules.

"I could go visit Brazil, it's been a little bit since I've gone exploring with him," Aussie suggested, sounding just as unsure as his brother.

France frowned, twirling her fork in her food. They shouldn't look so confused to be spending time to themselves. They should be happy like a huge weight had been taken off their shoulders because for the day it was. It just seemed like they were waiting for them to change their minds and instead demand that they prepare for war.

"Good, you two can spend some time outside of this house while I take the other two," Britain nodded, bringing that end of the

discussion to a close. He hadn't seemed to notice what France had, just happy that all his focus could be on America and Canada now. She had been right, the more he thought. They certainly needed a break, even if it was just for a day or so. He could handle things by himself for a bit. That should raise everyone's dwindling spirits.

"Is Russia still here?" Britain asked, finishing his plate.

"Yeah, last I checked he was still in America's room. They were just watching TV," Zee answered. He checked on them only a few times, not wanting to accidentally walk in on them doing something. He didn't think he would, given how weak America was, but then again it was America so that wouldn't stop him.

"Canada is still in his room, but he did eat. So did the other two. I think," Aussie shrugged. After receiving a puzzled look, he clarified, "I left them plates in America's room but that was it."

Britain nodded, standing with his plate and dirtied utensils. "I'll check on them. Zee, could you do the dishes?"

New Zealand nodded, taking Britain's plate and offering to take France's as well. She hadn't been paying attention, lost in her thoughts but snapped back to reality when Zee's hand entered her line of sight. She smiled and declined his offer to take her plate. She'll take care of it. Even if it was such a small thing, it would leave him one less thing to worry about.

After giving his thanks and compliments to Aussie, Britain dismissed his boys. That was all they needed to discuss for now.

He watched them leave the dining room, before turning back to France.

"You look troubled. Canada and America will be okay, I'm sure of it. Now that I've gotten through to America a little bit, he should be more willing to work with us."

France sighed, setting her glass of wine down. "It's not that, mon cheri ( my love). I am worried about them, too, but it's Australia and New Zealand. I'm worried about them as well."

Britain blinked, confused a little by what he thought was an unnecessary worry. The two seemed fine, as fine as they could be of course given that they all were worried and on edge more than ever. A day off should help mend that.

"Dear, I don't understand. Why the extra worry? They look to be okay, and they'll be distracted tomorrow by friends. They'll be okay."

France nodded, sipping on her wine. "Perhaps you're right. I still want to talk with them to at least make sure they are okay. We've been so preoccupied with America and Canada, I don't want them to feel discarded."

"Of course, but I'm sure they understand. They know we have to focus on those two more, especially now," Britain rested his hand on her shoulder and kissed her cheek. "And besides, they are their own countries, remember? They aren't little colonies anymore."

France watched as her husband walked off, presumably to check on the three upstairs as he said he would. She played with the ring on her finger, studying the diamond surrounded by rubies and sapphires. He had presented it to her on their wedding day and it looked just as beautiful now as it did when she first saw it. It was a beautiful wedding, Britain wouldn't have had it any other way, and it had felt absolutely magical. She had felt and looked like a princess in her long white gown adorn with diamonds to make her sparkle and shimmer like she was told she always had. France was so happy to marry the man who helped free her during the war. She fought so hard at the end.

As daft as he was sometimes, she still loved him. But as she sat there she debated whether or not she should make a baguette with the sole intention of using it to hit him over the head. Besides, baking would help clear her mind. She needed a break, as much as her sons did, too, she reminded herself.

Upstairs, unbeknownst to the incoming assault by baguette, Britain walked to America's room. His shoulder ached, but he ignored it the best he could as he knocked on the bedroom door. He received no answer, so he opened the door to peek inside.

He spotted the two plates of empty food placed on the floor by the bed where Russia and America lay. The two looked to be asleep, America leaning against Russia with his arm curled around the country's torso, almost hugging him in his sleep. Russia had his arm around America, too, but instead of a peaceful expression, he looked as if he was contemplating murder. It wasn't hard to imagine that even as he slept he looked menacing, given who his father was.

Britain wordlessly picked the plates off the floor and thought about waking them up. It wasn't agreed that Russia would be staying the night, but when he reached his hand out to wake them he paused. Perhaps just for the night. America did look happier, even if he was asleep, next to his friend.

He particularly didn't like that they were snuggled next to each other, but he ignored that for now.

Instead, he left their tv on, shut off the light, and quietly exited the room. They could discuss everything in the morning then.

**Okay, I know I said hiatus but I was reading a really fucking good fanfiction and when I got to the end I realized they haven't updated since last year and it broke my heart. So no hiatus now, even tho it was only for like a week. I'm setting a new goal of updating at least once a month, twice if I'm feeling frisky.**

**Also just as a side note I love writing in Soviet's position a little cause of the snarky comments he makes to himself. It just makes me laugh while writing and I can't wait until I do it again.**

**Anyways till next time ladies, lads, and nonbinary comrades,**

**Ësgöge'ae'**

**~Galaxy**

# Tea Time Exposition

**Narrator's POV**

"You breathe fire!"

"Mother, please."

"Father."

"Right, pardon me. Father, please."

Wales held his son's face in his hands, squishing his cheeks together and forcing him to face different directions. Britain's teeth had grown slightly sharper and his irises had an almost unsettling faint glow to them. He had also grown claw-like nails, which he had covered with gloves until he could show Wales.

"I knew when I joined the Kingdom you would gain some of my features," Wales said as he took off Britain's hat, tossing it onto his sofa. He hummed as he pulled on Britain's dragon ears just to move them and prod at them further. "I assumed this was it, I mean, maybe claws or something else."

"Ow, father, is this–" Britain was let go and Wales walked around him, looking him up and down "–is this really necessary?"

"I don't understand what happened. Fire? Really? That's-thats awesome of course," Wales stood in place, biting on their thumb and trying to think. He had gotten the call from Britain last night, so he knew something happened but he assumed it had something to do with America, not a sudden development of easy access to arson.

"But?"

"Hmm? Oh right. But, why now?"

Britain picked up his hat, brushing it off slightly and placing it back on his head. In his call last night he didn't go into too much detail, and he wanted to keep most of what happened close to his chest. He wasn't sure if he could even trust Russia or Kaz to keep quiet. Of course, this was one of the countries that helped raise him, so inherently he should trust them.

"I believe I know, " Britain sat down on the couch, prompting Wales to do the same. There was a gap along the backside of the sofa, allowing for Wales to stretch out their red scaled wings and rest them comfortably behind it.

Explaining how his sons had gotten themselves into danger wasn't what Britain wanted to talk about, but for the sake of finding out what was wrong with him, he had to deal. Wales was familiar with the situation but also knew Britain wasn't telling them the full truth. He just said he was told by UN to keep it close to his chest so he didn't question.

"I don't know how to explain it, I felt this rage boil inside of me and my throat burned and all I thought was to yell. When I did and I opened my eyes, that's when I saw all those flames. I hadn't felt that, that—" Britain paused, struggling to find the correct word "—well, *scared* in a very long time."

Wales nodded, thinking to themself.

"It was all just blind rage, almost. I heard America scream and saw those tribes, and I just- well I don't know, I suppose I acted-"

"Out of instinct?"

Britain nodded, setting his hands down once he realized he was waving them around as he spoke.

"Hmm, I think this has something to do with me, obviously, and you being a unification." Wales stood up, walking over to their bookshelf and scanning the rows of books. The small shelf in the sitting room was mostly for light reading and the bigger more in-depth books were in the study. He would have to reread and touch up on those books along with what he had written down.

"Yes, Haudenosaunee did say I didn't understand the power inside of me, is that what she's referring to?"

"It could be," Wales said as they took a book from a shelf and began to scan through the pages. "I assumed with the two wars, we would've seen these signs earlier."

Britain looked at his hands, as Wales continued.

"Since nothing did happen, we all assumed nothing would ever. The war was horrible, it should've been enough to spark something in you."

For a moment the distant sound of gunfire echoed in Britain's ears. They twitched as he tried to focus on his father's voice.

But his hands. He could lift his gaze from them. He had witnessed many horrible things in his long life. Over 300 years of it were his, so it would be impossible not to.

He had lost many things as well. Some he deserved to lose, others he didn't.

He could never shake that memory.

His partner's blood soaked through his uniform, his dazed expression already resembled a corpse's as his head rolled around. He hated to remember himself desperately trying to stop the bleeding, yelling at someone to help, screaming medic as loud as his voice could carry. He knew it was a long shot with the sounds of war roaring louder than he ever could.

But there was a moment in there. Britain realized then. The same burning heat, the same fear, and rage that ran through his blood. He had felt that before.

"Actually, I believe there was something," Britain spoke up, forcing himself to look away from his hands. "During the first war, when. . ."

Wales noticed how he almost forced himself to sit up correctly and keep the formal posture that always came so naturally to him.

"When Portugal. Died. I"—Britain cleared his throat—"I felt the same burning feeling, the same animalistic rage. But I can't remember what stopped it."

The last part was a lie. A partial one at least. Britain knew what happened, but the memory was hazy and fogged with time and mourning. He rather not talk about it and hasn't properly since that day. Close friends, they were regarded as, closer than anyone realized. Instead of the last words being rooted in fear, Portugal decided on ones of love and to seal it with a kiss.

Britain had felt as his lover's last breath left his lips, how his body went limp as if he was just in a peaceful sleep. He no longer choked on his own blood, no longer groaned, and cried from the pain. All the sounds around him disappeared, the ringing quiet as he could do nothing but stare at the forever-closed eyes of the man he had shared a bed with. The shot that killed him should've hit Britain, but of course, Portugal had been a hero.

He was an amazing soldier. He had gotten stuck behind enemy lines and made it back alive but with no ammo left in his rifle. He had tried to help defend Belgium's territory with Britain but the German Empire overran them eventually. He had been astonishing with his survival, his heroics, and his resilience. He hadn't even wanted to speak up on his accomplishments, if it wasn't for Scotland's loud mouth and excitement for stories, Portugal most likely would never have.

Portugal had never wanted to be in the war. But Britain knew they all needed more help.

His last words had calmed the rage and fury inside of him, another action that probably saved Britain's life. If he had gotten up to charge blindly at The German Empire, he would've made himself an easy target. He would've ended up nothing but a memory just as Portugal had and they would've never freed Belgium.

"Quem não arrisca não petisca. You were the best risk I've ever taken."

"Did you hear me?"

Wales set a hand onto his adoptive son's shoulder, feeling how he tensed up under his touch.

Britain looked up quickly, his eyes glowing green with slit pupils. Tears had started to run down his cheeks, unbeknownst to him. He hadn't noticed that his leg was shaking, bouncing up and down and he had grasped the fabric of his trousers tightly in his hands.

"Ehem, pardon me," Britain cleared his throat and straightened himself out, along with wiping his face and eyes clean of tears. With a few blinks and a few breaths to calm himself down and ground him back into the present, his eyes returned to normal as well.

"I understand that time is difficult to talk about," Wales sat down next to Britain and wrapped his wing and arm around him. "Which is why I think you should, son. It's been decades, don't you think that's enough time?"

"I have talked about it," Britain said trying to stand up as if he could physically walk away from this conversation. He was held in place by Wale's tight grip so instead, he turned his head away.

"No, no you haven't. You've given your official report and documents, not about how it affected you."

"It's very wildly known how that war affected everybody. It was different from any wars previous, widespread like a disease. There's very little I can add to what's already been said about it."

Besides, what was done is done. He's moved on.

Wales sighed, hearing the sharp tone in Britain's words. He wasn't going to talk and any efforts to have otherwise would only end in him storming out.

"Okay," Wales said as he let his arm go and tucked his wing into the gap in the couch. "We won't talk about that. Was there another reason you stopped by?"

"Yes, in fact, there was. America, with his *condition.* There have been some recent developments with it and it seems to have spread to Canada, now. Could you still help us with that?"

Wales nodded, sensing the urgency. "Of course, you're family is my family. Even if it's not by blood."

England and Scotland had been Britain's true biological parents. Wales joined the unification first, however, passing down his dragon-like features as he did as part of their agreement. Britain didn't remember any of that, and at that time he wasn't known as Great Britain just yet. No, it wasn't until his father properly joined did he gain that title and grow a little more powerful.

When Scotland and England divorced that did make things more complicated. But Scotland didn't leave the union, even if today he still talks like he will. Britain knows he won't though.

Of course, his title is much more of a mouthful now. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The UK he's called sometimes, but he's grown up being commonly called Britain or Great Britain, so that's what he prefers.

He didn't consider Northern Ireland family, just at the very least business partners. Besides, joining a unification didn't gift you with familial status, that was something given through blood and bond. According to Britain at least, and not like that was ever objected to by either party.

Unions don't have to be related to anyone at all, actually. The EU, UN, or NATO don't have families per se. Not actual ones, he guessed. America likes to pretend he's NATO's dad but at the end of the day, there wasn't much time for practical bonding. Unions usually grew up quicker than most countries. They have to, they don't get to have much time to be a kid when they're there for an important reason. Things such as threats of war, revolution, countries needing resources or order, along with responsibility in general makes for a very short childhood.

Leisure time as a grown union makes up for that, though. That's what Britain thought, anyways. He didn't remember his childhood, if he even had one that is. It belonged to a past life.

Wales gave Britain the book he had pulled off the self that would give him more information on Welsh folklore and dragons so that

he could at least have an idea of where this part of him now comes from.

France would arrive a little after that, after her meeting with UN. She had to partly lie a little bit to be able to be given more time in finding a cure, which wasn't caught. So with some resistance, UN allotted them more time before they would have to take over. Ever since America had gotten violent in his episodes, they had been putting pressure on Britain and Frances to surrender America over for inpatient care. In a situation like this, America wasn't seen fit to reject or accept medical care, so that choice was given to Britain and France. But UN was starting to get anxious.

It was the reminder said by UN that planted the seed of worry in France for the rest of that evening, giving her the idea of going on a vacation.

"If it's hurting more to hang on, it would be in your family's best interest to let go."

She began to realize that it started to look that way. No one ever dare say it out loud in fear of maybe appearing selfish, or cruel, or being made into the bad guy, but it was looking to be easier to just hand America over. None of them wanted to, and none of them would ever say it, much less actually do it. It was just the thought in the back of their heads that maybe he would be better off someplace where he won't attack anyone.

Either way, Britain seemed as driven as ever on removing this curse. It wouldn't matter in the end if France wanted to give America to UN, Britain had the final say. So if his mind was made, there was very little anyone could do.

When the next day did roll around and everyone woke, Britain brought America his breakfast. He knew he needed to talk to him about visiting Wales, and seeing how he had ditched it the first time he was slightly relieved he was wheelchair bound.

"America?" Britain knocked on the door before entering, holding his plate in one hand. "I brought you- oh."

Russia sat up, still in America's bed, his sleepiness disappearing almost immediately. He hadn't meant to fall asleep, he didn't know if he was even allowed to stay the night.

"America." Russia quickly shook the still sleeping country.

"Five more minutes," America grumbled into a pillow, his voice muffled by the fabric.

"I'm afraid not, son."

"Oh shit dad," America sat up quickly before wincing at his movements, and slowly settled back a little. He looked over at the doorway to see his father dressed sharply and holding a plate of what looked like scrambled eggs with pancakes. Russia was still sitting next to him, meaning that they didn't wake up early enough to hide him.

"I'm surprised you haven't tried to sneak him out of Canada's balcony," Britain smiled, handing America his plate of food. "If I had known he was still going to be here I would've brought him a plate as well."

He's being nice. Why?

"Thanks, but um," America looked down at the food and bit the inside of his lip. Don't ask why, it might give him a reason to yell. Just go with it. "How's Canada, has he gotten outta bed this morning?"

Britain shook his head. "No, but he might have to today."

"What why?"

"I'll explain once I come back with his plate," Britain looked to Russia, who seemed almost paralyzed with confusion, and left the room.

"Oh, he's mad as hell."

Russia looked to America who chewed on a bite of eggs and stared at the door.

"He handled it pretty well if he was."

"See, that's how I know. Normally he doesn't give a shit and will just yell. Instead, he just made a joke, I didn't know he knew how to make those."

The two quietly snickered before refocusing.

"He must be really pissed, I dunno."

Russia hummed as a reply, stealing a piece of pancake from America's plate.

Despite what America was worried about, Britain wasn't angry. A little surprised that Russia was there, he had assumed when he saw them asleep last night by the morning America would try to pretend that he had left. Even if he did request Russia stay until he got back to ensure his son's privacy, he hadn't meant for him to stay overnight, either.

America was more docile when he did have a friend around, perhaps this was a good thing.

Britain brought upstairs a second plate for Russia as France was coming back downstairs.

"Canada is feeling a lot better," France said with a proud smile. "He's still upset though, so don't push him too much you hear me?"

Britain nodded about to walk away but was quickly slapped on the arm.

"I mean it. You better allow those boys some rest and you too."

"I understand, dear," Britain kissed France's cheek and continued his way to America's room. He turned his head to look back at her, slowing his walk down a little. "France?"

"Yes, Mon chéri?"

"If you're free tonight, would you like to go on a romantic outing with me?"

France smiled, missing the little mischievous smile Britain wore. She crossed her arms and hummed loudly, tapping her chin. "I'll have to see, after all, I'm always so busy nowadays."

"How about 8 at Osteria Francescana?"

"Oh, Italian! Hmm, make it 7, and it's a date."

Britain nodded, tipping his hat as a silent agreement, before turning back around.

It had been a while since France had gone on a date with Britain. She loved hosting romantic outings, and scheduling dates and rides in her carriage of love, it was her favorite small side business. The other is baking and cooking, which usually went hand in hand.

A date at the Italian sisters' restaurant would be a perfect use of their day.

Once Britain handed Russia his breakfast, he filled America in on the same thing France had told Canada; They needed to visit Wales today.

"And please, before you argue with me, this is affecting Canada, now, too. He needs your help."

America frowned, knowing that looking for a cure was pointless, as he has stated many times. But after his surprise and semi-forced visit with the tribes and his long-lost mother, maybe he was wrong. He wasn't sure if they would be willing to help them now, not after that huge fight. They attacked his family, he wasn't even sure if he wanted their help anyways.

Attacking his dad he could forgive maybe, but everyone else? No.

Besides, Britain was right. He's not the only one being affected now. Canada's eyes are black like his. He doesn't want to see him have to suffer through the same episodes and end up in a wheelchair like him, too.

"Fine. But only if Russia can come along too."

"America, this really is supposed to be a private family matter."

"Then no."

Russia looked at Britain, expecting some kind of look. He got it, a side eye that seemed to say "out of all countries, why you?"

As if Russia knew himself.

"Fine. If you trust he'd be able to keep this secret then he may come."

America grabbed Russia's hand that was beneath the blanket and squeezed it. Russia in turn squeezed back.

"I'll let you get ready, you have an hour then we'll leave," Britain stood up and headed towards the door. "Russia, may I talk to you outside?"

Russia looked down at America who narrowed his eyes at his father before looking up at him. He hesitated but then nodded.

"I'm gonna eat your eggs," America said grabbing Russia's plate so he could get up and out of bed.

"Figured," Russia smiled at him before following Britain out the door. He saw America dramatically shove a forkful of scrambled eggs into his mouth and began chewing obnoxiously. Yeah. That one is his and he's sticking to it.

"There's plenty more downstairs," Britain said as he shut the door behind them. "Come, we can walk and talk."

"It's okay, I didn't care about them that much."

"Would you rather stand still and talk then?"

Russia thought for a moment and looked down the long wing decorated with portraits, paintings, and cases of historical relics. The interior more resembled a museum rather than a home. Fit with the same expected quiet and calm atmosphere, also not fitting with Russia's idea of home.

Then again, he was used to a more loud and messy environment.

"I could eat more," Russia decided.

"Excellent." Britain started walking towards the staircase that lead downstairs.

America would've made an egg pun, Russia thought to himself as he followed behind.

"I know America trusts you, and you did help keep my boys safe during the," the older country paused, trying to find the best word to use, "*incident*. I suppose I do owe you some leeway in that."

Russia knew there was going to be another part to that. A slight objection to a statement that would've meant more without it.

"But until I know for certain you can be trusted, don't expect full hospitality."

There it was. Nothing unreasonable, he understood the worry. It's not like Russia trusted him either. But he did trust America. They could both agree to that. Even if it was partly.

At least partial hospitality came with free food.

Britain also took that time to explain how to carry himself when visiting Wales. They're very physical, always expecting a hug whenever someone visits. With less close countries though it's mostly simple things such as a hand on your arm or shoulder, pats, and soft shoulder punches. Since Russia hardly ever sees Wales he'll probably only have to deal with that.

"They are also genderfluid, and I don't care what your views are on that, you will respect them."

Russia nodded, not bothering to say anything about that. He knew everyone assumed he wasn't accepting of anything, which he couldn't blame anyone for. He was very much like that until recently. His father was like that as well, very outwardly in fact. So was he for a while.

Times change and people grow. Russia thought for sure he wasn't gay about a year ago, and now he's dating a guy. Secretly, sure, but still that's a hell of a leap.

"America needs to stay here to rest. He's doing a lot better from what I can tell, but this trip may not be good for him," Britain said as they walked back upstairs, Russia carrying and slowly eating his second plate. It felt unnatural to be eating more than one plate of food, especially for a meal such as breakfast.

"It would do him good if you managed to convince him to stay in bed and rest. Preferably here."

"Why me?"

"America doesn't like to listen to me. I'm an authority figure so he must rebel."

It's a little bit more than that, Russia thought to himself. Even if it wasn't, what he said still held up some truth.

"I've noticed he'll listen to others such as Canada, France, or even you."

Basically, the countries in his life that try to listen and actually understand him, then. No wonder Britain was having a difficult time.

Britain reminded Russia they had around 40 minutes until they had to leave, before leaving him at America's door to check on Canada. Happy to get away, Russia quickly entered America's room and closed the door.

"That was kind of long. I thought for sure he like kicked you out or something," America said, sitting on the edge of the bed. He was dressed for the day, wearing a black shirt that had a picture of a cat wearing sunglasses, ripped jeans and his green jacket was sitting beside him.

"Nyet, just told me to keep an eye on you and be nice." Russia sat down next to America, who reached out to steal more food off his plate.

"That's it?"

Russia nodded, setting the plate down on the nightstand next to the bed. America frowned, and instead leaned against Russia's side since he couldn't eat his food anymore.

"Paraphrasing. He doesn't trust me."

"Yeah, I figured that. At least he isn't being an asshole about it though."

Russia looked down at America and smiled. He kissed the top of his head and wrapped his arm around his waist.

"Did you need anything else? I can carry it all for you."

"Nah, it's just to Wales. She's pretty chill. Kind of cooky," America sat up a little and looked around his room. His legs felt sore, and so did the rest of his body if he was honest. His voice sounded normal, and his throat didn't hurt as much as it did yesterday. He'll just try not to talk as often or as loud. "I mean, I hate that wheelchair. It's so uncomfy, I can barely move my arms around in that thing."

"It's a hospital one, da?"

"Yeah. It's not made for everyday use, so I mean I guess it's gonna be uncomfortable but like. I'd rather you just carry me instead."

Russia snorted but without hesitation, scooped America up into his arms and stood up from the bed.

"Like this?" He asked, smiling down at America, something he so often and happily did.

America laughed, wrapping his arms around Russia's neck. "Yeah. I mean, no. Like, I like this, but maybe a piggyback ride to not look so absolutely fruity."

"On my back then?"

"Mmhmm."

"Okay, first let me," Russia adjusted his grip before he started to spin around. America let out a surprised yelp, tightening his arms around Russia, and quickly started to laugh.

"Russia, stop, you're gonna fucking trip," America tried to warn while he laughed. His room was starting to spin faster, so he held on tighter.

"Nyet, I won't."

"Stop it or I'm gonna make you!"

"How, you are weak and in my arms. You can't do anything," Russia teased, slightly slowing his turn just to not dizzy himself.

"Bet," America said before pulling himself up to Russia and smashing their lips together.

Russia was caught off-guard and his body froze for a second. He was still in motion as he did, and he tripped over his own foot and stumbled, falling backward. Both he and America yelled, Russia landing on his back, with America on top of him. The two started to laugh, deciding to stay where they had landed for a moment.

"Told you your dumbass would trip," America said as he weakly pulled himself up just to lean over Russia. He looked down at the country below him, seeing him still laughing lightly.

"It's your fault," Russia started to calm down his laughs. "I wouldn't have fallen if you didn't do that."

"What this?"

America leaned down and kissed him again. It was a quick peck, but even if it was small it still left Russia stunned.

"Heh. You're cute like this," America teased. Instead of a reply, Russia just shut his eyes and turned his head away, letting out a quick little huff.

Instead of teasing, America laid himself onto Russia and ran one of his hands through his hair. It was messy and growing longer now,

almost down to his shoulders. He could hardly tell since he always wore that ushanka.

He lowered himself just enough for him to be able to kiss his cheek softly. Russia turned to look up at America, his cheeks burning and visibly giving away how flustered he was. He knew his heart was racing and just hoped that America could at least not feel that.

With a small hum, America moved to kiss him again but stopped just an inch above Russia's lips.

Confused, Russia blinked and looked to meet his boyfriend's gaze.

"Hmm?" America ran his hand a little lower, gently combing through the white hair and brushing against the nape of Russia's neck a little.

"I thought," Russia mumbled, eyeing the door for a second before looking back up at America. He swallowed down his nervousness but found that he still couldn't finish voicing his thought.

"You thought I was gonna do all the work? Come on Russia, if you wanna kiss me I'm right here~"

America pursed his lips together and began making kissing noises to further antagonize Russia.

Having no choice but to shut him up, Russia grabbed his face and pulled him down an inch to meet his lips. America chuckled into the kiss, feeling Russia's hands slowly move from his cheeks to his hair before he assumed the floor. His eyes were closed, and he didn't exactly want to break away from this kiss to look. Instead, he wrapped one arm under Russia's neck as the other one blindly searched for one of Russia's hands.

He was gonna have him wrap his arms around his waist, since it looked like he would have to guide him in what to do. It would've made sense, the country has never been with anyone before.

Instead, Russia set his hands on America's shoulders and pushed him slightly. America pulled away, a little confused, and looked to the door. There was no one there and it was still closed, and he

didn't hear anyone behind it or in the hallway. What was wrong?

"My back," Russia complained sitting up a little.

"Oh shit, what is it?"

"I'm laying on something it started to hurt."

"Here let me," America said as he pulled himself off of the Russian. He used the side of the bed for support and used all his strength to lift himself up to his own two feet. He was still mostly hunched over but either way, Russia still was able to stand up.

He had fallen onto a pile of clothes, so it didn't bother him too much when he had fallen but something must've been in one of the jean pockets or under something. Either way, Russia wasn't ready to be done with America yet.

"Come here," Russia said, picking up America and setting him down on the bed. He crawled onto it too and made his way back to America where he quickly took his face in his hands again and resumed. His lips were soft, and he could taste the maple syrup he had on his pancakes. He's not used to doing something as simple as kissing, hell, he's never really thought about it until America.

Americans. They always have to ruin something.

He's happy he did.

Maybe he's demisexual. He heard about that and saw something about it online when he was looking up 'Am I Gay?' quizzes. Honestly, that should've been his first hint, but alas. He's not sure, it's not like he has much experience to go off of anyways.

He shouldn't be thinking about that right now. Focus, Russia.

"You know," America said between kisses. "If you stay over again" he pulled Russia closer and kissed him harder before pulling away "—we can totally do a lot more of this. And maybe a little more if you catch my drift."

If he hadn't, the wink he did got his message across.

Russia looked away quickly again, holding his mouth shut tightly for a second. Britain did want him to keep America at home and seemed open to the idea of him staying another night if that helped make that happen.

He wasn't ready to go all the way just yet though. He needed a little more time to get used to this.

"I think I can do that. You'll have to ask your father first."

"If I listen to him today he might just let us."

"You'll listen to your father for me?" Russia raised a brow and couldn't help a small sly smile from forming.

"Anything for you Ruski," America said, moving to lay his head in his lap. He turned to look up at the Russian, reaching out a hand to play with the strands of white hair around his shoulders.

"You should take your hat off more often, I like your hair."

Russia smiled, taking his hand and kissing the palm.

"You should do the same with your sunglasses," he said. He knew America hated them, and now he had a better understanding of why. But he just couldn't help but look at them and remember seeing the entire night sky in them. How the universe was captured perfectly in the dark reflections, he wished America could see it through his eyes. Then he wouldn't be so scared of them, and he could begin to at least not perceive himself as a monster.

He didn't want to dismiss the actual meaning of them, especially after the last visit with the tribes. Not everything is black and white, he guessed.

"Only around each other than, hmm?"

Russia nodded, kissing his hand once more before letting it go.

"Mhm. I don't like my hair, but if you like it then it can't be that bad."

America smiled leaning up to kiss him again. He just wanted to stay like this, just calm and talking and doing nothing but relaxing in each other's presence. But he knew they had to get ready to visit Wales.

"So, can you carry me downstairs?" He asked, his lips still brushing against Russia's as he talked.

"On my back?"

"Yeah. That looks less fruity than in your arms."

Russia nodded, agreeing. He thought that just his arm around his shoulders to help him walk was the better way to go but he didn't want him to push himself too far right away.

"I can try to walk to the stairs themselves, but definitely not down them."

That'll work.

They made sure they had everything, America's sunglasses, their shoes, and a jacket cause it was still cold. Russia grabbed his coat off the back of America's desk chair. He patted the pockets, double checking his father's journal was in there along with his house keys and the random receipts that he's forgotten to throw out. He'll do it later.

Canada was the one to tell them they were leaving, and he looked a little surprised to see Russia. He didn't know he had stayed the night, or that he was even over at all. He had stayed in his room the entire time, so it wasn't like he could've known. He just was hoping to be able to talk to America alone. He could do it at Wales hopefully. They'll have time to be alone when they're being examined by them, or whatever it was that Wales needed to do.

Russia and Canada both helped America walk to the stairs and as planned, once on the steps America got onto Russia's back. Making sure the two didn't fall, Canada stayed close and watched them carefully to the car.

Feeling a pull in his chest is what woke Soviet from what he

assumed was sleep. He didn't know what it was, he didn't dream but it did come with the feeling of being rested in a way. He had spent his time wandering around Britain's house, admiring the new place. He had seen his old house, it was a lot more modest than this mansion so he was excited to wander its halls and try to scare the residents. As a proper ghost would.

But moving things a little didn't seem to faze New Zealand or Australia, so he grew bored very quickly. Instead, he focused on picking things up entirely by himself and trying to open drawers. Eventually, he used up his energy and fazed himself into the dark void of nonexistence.

Now with Russia out of the house, therefore meaning his journal, he was being pulled to leave as well. Soviet easily walked through the door, forcing himself to ignore the weird feeling, and saw his son helping America get into the small black car. Britain had two vehicles, not counting the more extravagant limo and a beat-up red truck he assumed was one of his sons. Why did he need a limo? He could understand one car for him and another for France, but who on this island needs a limo?

The ride to Wales was quiet but thankfully short. Soviet sat in the passenger's seat, not happily of course but he didn't want to sit in the back. He would've had to sit where someone was sitting, and he wasn't willing to have someone sit essentially inside of him.

No one said anything, but they knew it had to have been Russia's presence that through off the atmosphere in the car. Anyone could almost tell, especially with Britain occasionally glancing in the mirror to check on him. It was obvious he wasn't doing anything wrong, just looking out the window. But what wasn't entirely obvious was the two holding hands. Canada was sitting on the other side of America so even he didn't notice.

Soviet wondered if he wasn't focusing a small bit of his energy on staying in the car if he would be dragged behind it anyways. As if he had a rope around his waist attached to the rear bumper. He almost wanted to find out, but at the same time, he wanted to keep what dignity he had.

Maybe on the ride back, he could.

Wales had been waiting for them outside to greet them. She hugged her son first, purposefully being over affectionate and pinching his cheeks because it made Canada and America laugh to themselves. She had noticed they looked worse for weary and it did work in making them smile a little more.

Still, something hung around them. She couldn't tell what but it was almost like a cold presence. She wasn't too sure who it was coming from either, Canada looked visibly stressed and like he hasn't slept, America needed aid in getting out of the car and clearly looked to be in pain, and Russia always gave off that vibe.

The presence she felt was Soviet of course, but she didn't know that.

"Come on in, I made you all some tea if you would like it.

"You got like pop or something?" America asked, quickly getting a look of disapproval from Britain.

"Nope, you're getting tea young man. It'll help soothe your pain."

"Damn leaf water," America muttered to himself, Russia holding back a small chuckle. "I want my syrup water. Or bean water."

They all settled inside, Wales bringing out her books from the study and setting them down on the small coffee table she had in front of the couch.

"So, I've gotten all the books I needed that could possibly help you two with this curse," Wales said, grabbing the first of three and opening a page she had bookmarked. "These are a few curses or other supernatural-related reasons for black eyes I've found."

Canada took the book she held out and looked at the page. It described a few recorded stories, but if not born with it, the most common reason would always seem to lead to corruption. The most noticeable case is about their father. When Britain got too power hungry and tried to control the islands.

But even that was more rooted in him being a unification than a

curse made by others. His eyes were an effect on his own, something that only he could fix. And he eventually did once he calmed down on colonialism.

"I know it's not much, not many countries have ever heard of cases like this. It was a common belief in folklore that creatures with dark black eyes were from another world entirely or even things like demons."

"Yeah, wasn't I like killed cause everyone thought I was possessed by a demon?"

"Yes. Everyone hadn't separated superstitions from everything yet," Wales nodded. She looked to Britain who just held his gaze low and focused on finishing his cup of tea.

Wales picked up another book and handed it to America. "I know you find skepticism in things such as this, but by now you must think differently."

"Magic? I mean yeah, I can't deny it. That's explainable, like." America flipped through the book, holding the page that was bookmarked between his fingers. "Like how if we showed someone from 300 years ago a phone now they would think it's magic. I like to think of it as like a science we haven't explained or explored too much yet."

"One way to look at it," Russia commented, leaning over to read the page America stopped on. It was about the story of a ghost-like figure that haunted the woods and beckoned travelers into them.

America looked down at the page and smiled. "But yeah, this stuff? Nah, none of that. Ghosts aren't real."

"Idiot," Soviet muttered, considering knocking the book out of his hands.

"Either way," Wales said as she picked up the last book and without opening it handed it to Britain. "This was the book I wanted to give you. It has more information about unifications, the different types, and such. It's all modern, too, with everything we know about ones

such as the UN, the EU, or NATO."

"Unifactions?" Soviet walked to stand behind the couch where Britain sat to look at the book more clearly.

"Wait, why do you need that, dad? Don't you, like, know all about that stuff?" America asked, looking past Canada to try and peer like Soviet was.

Britain swallowed, running his hands along the cover of the book. He hadn't mentioned to either of his sons what had also happened when they had to save them from the natives. He hadn't wanted to, he felt as if there were more important things to worry about then. It was an issue he alone needed to figure out.

"There's been some new developments I needed to learn more about. I can tell you all once I have more information."

"No."

America blinked, looking at Canada a little surprised. His tone was low and he had the sides of his book gripped tightly in his hands.

"S-Sorry, I-I didn't mean," he looked at his dad and to Wales once he noticed how caught off guard they looked. He cleared his throat and relaxed his hands before saying, "I mean, father, we all don't really understand anything that's happening. I think we should all just tell each other what we need to, you know? Instead of leaving everyone in the dark?"

Wales smiled, nodding her head, and looked to Britain. "Canada is right. You should be honest with them, they are your family after all. Lead by example."

Britain sighed, taking off his hat and running his hands through his hair. "While we were fighting off the natives to get you two out of there, there was a new development in things that involve being a unification."

Russia knew immediately what he was talking about. He hadn't forgotten how he had visibly changed, how his eyes had glowed green. He assumed he would tell his sons, Britain seemed like the

type of country to make that a big news story.

"I didn't want to tell you two because we obviously had more important matters to handle, but I do suppose Canada is right."

America and Canada looked at each other for a quick second, trying to see how the other felt about what was being discussed.

"We believe that Wale's role in the kingdom had more of an impact than I initially thought."

"Just get to the point, old man, you use too much flowery language," Soviet complained, turning to pace a little to get his impatience settled.

"During the fight, I had more strength than normal, I jumped up onto the roof of one of their buildings easily, my hands, they had changed to resemble claws and at the end, I yelled at them to leave you two alone and I suppose I might've blown fire at them all."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Hold on, you can breathe fire?!" America exclaimed, his mouth open wide in shock.

"That's what I said!" Wales shared the same shocking excitement as him, her wings opening up a little.

"That's something, I'll give you that," Soviet nodded, looking to his son as he mimicked the same expression as his.

"Like-like a dragon?" Canada asked.

"Yes, which is why I went to Wales for assistance," Britain became hyper-aware of everyone's eyes, feeling as if there were even a set behind him looking at him. His ears twitched, flicking a little as he looked up to his mother.

"Mother?"

Wales nodded.

"Mother, I wanted to ask if you had found anything else. I've read what you've given me, I just don't understand how I can control

something like this."

"I tried to speak with UN, but they didn't answer. I can try again really quick to see if we can set up a meeting with them, or at least someone who knows more about that specific issue."

*Haud would probably know*, Russia thought to himself as he watched Wales leave the room. He shook his head free from that. This wasn't his issue, he didn't need to find answers for him. Besides, they were enemies now. Going there would not be a good idea.

As Wales left, Britain left to go make another pot of tea. He had finished his, and Russia and Canada were still drinking theirs. America, as he assumed, had barely touched his.

"Drink your tea, son. It'll be rude not to."

America looked to Britain's ears and noticed his teeth definitely looked sharper. He picked up his drink and nodded, taking a small sip to satisfy his dad.

It did, and with a nod, Britain left the room to make more.

"Holy shit our dad's a dragon, like an actual dragon. Not just the ears, like. Fire," Canada mumbled, looking to America. He was given the same look of shock in return, along with a slow nod of agreement.

"Damn, I'm kind of scared to disobey him again."

"You still are gonna aren't you?"

"Yeah. Just carefully now," America started to laugh, getting Canada to do the same, only he tried to cover his mouth to hide it.

"His eyes did look dragon-like," Russia commented, turning his head slightly to look into the kitchen. "They were green with slit pupils."

"You seen him?" America asked, keeping to the low volume they were all talking in.

Russia nodded. "I didn't see the fire, but I saw the claws and his

eyes. He's not lying."

"Holy fuck," America decided on chugging his tea quickly. It tasted like honey, so it wasn't that he didn't like it he just didn't like what it stood for. He may not fully remember the Boston Tea Party, but he sure as hell remembered the symbolism.

"Hmm," Soviet thought to himself, looking at the book Britain left on the table. In life, he studied unifications and found a curiosity in countries that gave power and received it from them. That curiosity hadn't died as he did.

He looked to Russia as the three talked about Britain like he wasn't just in the other room. He told himself he would stop trying to influence his son and focus his strengths on more physical aspects that he could do himself, but he needed more information.

Well, more wanted than needed.

"Russia," Soviet said as he placed his hand on his son's shoulders. "Ask about unifications. Find out more."

Russia blinked a few times, slightly shivering and pulling his jacket to cover himself more. He looked over at Britain, his back turned to the sitting room as he poured tea into two small cups. Why could he and Haud and people like them do the things they could? He knew it was because of the unification thing, but why? His father had attempted something similar, but it didn't work the same. Was it the methods he had chosen? He didn't want to ask, talking about his father's death was the last thing he wanted to do.

"No, son," Soviet pushed, feeling Russia slightly resist. "Information is important. Do whatever you need to get it."

Russia leaned over and asked, "Canada? Could you pass me that book?"

Canada looked at the navy blue book with the golden trim and writing on the cover that Wales had handed their dad. He grabbed it and gave it to Russia asking, "why? Kaz told me your dad taught you all about unifications."

"Wales said it's more modern information," Soviet said and Russia repeated him.

"Also," Russia continued, "I wanted to know a little more, I guess? Understand why my dad was so interested."

Soviet smiled, letting go of Russia, and took a step back. He was about to walk away but then paused when America spoke.

"Dude, you're eyes just changed blue, I just noticed that."

"Hmm?" Russia said, looking up at him.

"Oh yeah, that's kind of cool!" Canada beamed. "It does that when it gets cold right? It's not really cold in here though."

Russia shrugged. "I did just get really cold a moment ago. I think it was a breeze."

"Maybe it was a ghost, oooOOoooooh," America wiggled his fingers in front of Russia who gave him a disapproving frown.

"Are you mocking me?" Soviet asked and Russia repeated him again, which caused Soviet to quickly look at him. He was no longer trying to influence his thoughts, why did he do that?

"No. Well. Kind of," America chuckled. "It probably was a draft or something."

Soviet looked to Russia, studying his eyes. Before he approached him, his irises had been more on the golden side but now they were a sharp turquoise. Perhaps if he just walked further away?

He did as he thought and noticed that the yellow tint grew more prominent and so he decided to stay there until it fully went back to what it had been before.

Russia rubbed his eyes and held his forehead in his hand, feeling his head get fuzzy. It was weird, he just felt a little tired almost. But it was weird because it came out of nowhere.

"Hey, you okay?" America asked, setting a hand on his shoulder.

"Da. Just a little tired, I think," Russia nodded, looking back up at him his irises now back to be predominantly golden. "I'm no longer cold, though."

"Heh, I noticed," America pointed to his eyes, which were hidden behind his sunglasses. Russia noticed his reflection and saw that his eyes were indeed indicating warmth. Also that his hair had fallen from his hat, so he placed the book in his lap to fix it.

"Im not surprised you're interested," Wales said as they walked into the living room. They held Russia's puzzled gaze and added, "About Unifications I mean."

Children of Unifications are very special, any unification is powerful for many different reasons, but ones born from it?"

Britain walked in carrying a small silver tray with more cups of tea for each country. He set it down on the small table in the center of them all and smiled when he saw America's empty cup.

"They have a little something extra. Your father attempted to recreate a similar effect with you, and to his credit, it worked slightly."

The silence from Russia as he looked at her urged her to explain further.

"Your eyes, as America pointed out. They change color with the temperature yes?"

"Da. Temperatures. My sister Belarus has said they also change in the light."

"But that's all yes?"

Russia nodded.

"You're father most likely intended a bit more," Wales picked up her cup of freshly made tea and took a sip before continuing. "I'm not sure how verse you all are on the subject, but as we all know, kingdoms or countries will sometimes come together and 'unite'. Mostly to form some sort of truce, agreement, or allies, but in all

sense a union. And children can be born from these unions to be a symbol of that, such as Britain, or as he's officially named 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain' and now, of course, Northern Ireland."

Wales looked to her son as he found the title amusing. Royalty status wasn't as big as it was a few hundred years ago, but it was still around nonetheless. Britain and his birth mother England were very proud of the titles.

"Now, it wasn't always known that the children of these unifications held power. In our history, that's actually a very recent discovery. Either way, when countries willfully unify, a child is born and becomes a vessel of that power. They can last as long as the unification and can grow stronger as more countries join."

"I'm a little confused," Canada spoke up, lifting his hand a little to catch Wales's attention before she continued.

"Dude, you're not in school you don't gotta raise your hand," America poked Canada's side, getting an elbow shove from him in return.

"Like you know what happens there, you barely even go anymore."

"Yeah, 'cause I already know all the stuff everyone's teaching. I don't wanna waste money on going and I only even went 'cause dad basically made me."

"*You* waste money?" Britain scoffed as he swirled his drink in his cup. "I paid for your classes, don't forget that. And you were there to learn updated information, we all were required."

"I never saw you there, maybe like to teach your weird British stuff, which by the way was boring."

"I requested to have my teachings at home," Britain said, smiling a little when he saw the looked of confusion on America's face. "Anything 'extra' I wanted to learn about I had to go there for, but there wasn't anything necessary so I didn't."

"Wait, that was an option? I didn't need to actually go?"

"Da, you didn't know that?" Russia raised a brow.

"No. And, why-why did you go? You hated everyone."

"I didn't hate everyone. Just a lot of them. Belarus wanted me to leave the house so I went with them. And I liked learning engineering from South Korea."

"We're actually welding now, we could use your help holding up some of the larger pieces of metal." Canada poked his head around America to look at Russia. "Why haven't you been back?"

Russia pointed at America—who looked offended at the accusation—and Canada nodded, understanding immediately.

Soviet sighed loudly, growing bored of this conversation. He was sitting on the small table in the corner of the room that had a small lamp decorated with red dragons waiting for them to refocus. He wanted Wales to keep talking about the unification, maybe she had found out where he went wrong. He had been wondering that ever since he woke up as a ghost.

Perhaps that's why he is still here. It was all he could think about until his death bed, this must be his "unfinished business".

Luckily for him, Wales asked, "Canada, what was your question?"

"Hmm?" Canada turned back to Wales and then remembered what they had been talking about before. "Oh, right. You said that the child of the unifications lasts as long as the thing itself and that they hold the power, right?"

Wales nodded.

"So, since Russia was meant for that power, and still has it a little, then why was Soviet the one who broke apart?"

Russia felt his body tense up but stopped himself from visibly flinching. He looked at Wales, briefly holding eye contact with her before quickly looking away.

"Well, as his official title would suggest, he wanted to be the

representation of a union. But, as I mentioned before, the power comes from a *willful* unification. Soviet forced his rule over countries, and when they didn't listen he would-erm. Dispose of them, to put it lightly. Then he would take the children of those countries and try again."

Soviet frowned and looked at his son. He noticed how he held himself very still, his hands in his pockets.

"I believe that he had every intention of trying to have the powers of a unification for himself, but for whatever reason, in the end, Russia became the vessel. But, somehow Soviet was the one who received the consequences, still. As the Union fell, so did he. We believe that Soviet had found something but most of his research around the subject and how he got Russia to be the vessel was lost. Or hidden. But we've also speculated that Russia may have some dormant *something* based alone on how extensive Soviet's union was, but without anything to power it in a sense, we don't think it will ever become of something."

"We?" Russia asked, sharply turning his head. He didn't mean for his voice to cut through the air as it did, so he forced himself to look relaxed. It did little for the ice that ran through Wales' veins after receiving such a tone with a look that made her watch her next words carefully.

"Um, yes. We. Uh. U-UN, mostly, actually. I became interested in the subject and did a lot of research, so UN asked for my assistance. I'm sure they would've asked your father, I mean. He was very knowledgeable in it, too, your dad, he uh, he knew a lot, and had a lot of books saved about it. I actually have some of the copies he used to have, I mean, not anymore, UN has them, but if he was, you know, still around I'm sure UN would've gone to him first. But, you know," Wales gave a weak smile, suddenly unsure if it was okay to hold eye contact with Russia. Or if it was a bad idea to not hold enough.

"How about we move on?" Britain cleared his throat, setting down his empty tea cup. The atmosphere in the room had gotten stiff and he didn't want his mother to stress further. Besides, they didn't come here for that. They came here for America and Canada.

"Yes, yes, of course," Wales said, brushing her short hair back. Her horns poked her arm, but she was used to it and knew to be aware of them. "You two, I think I might have an idea."

America looked to Canada as they shared the same nervous expression.

"Now, you know that mirrors are innately powerful, yes?"

Canada nodded and America shrugged.

"Well," Wales stood from her chair and walked over to where Soviet sat. He quickly stood and moved out of the way, allowing Wales to grab the handheld mirror that was placed on the table. "It's a common superstition that a person's reflection holds some kind of power, a reflection of the soul in a sense. It's why vampires and things like that are said to not have reflections."

"I'm not a vampire, I already checked," America laughed, glancing at Russia to see if he smiled. He did, thankfully. The talk about his dad hit a few cords for sure. "My skin is like this cause of my flag, I promise."

Wales chuckled. "No, I'm not checking for that. But, would you please remove your glasses for me?"

America's smile quickly left. He lowered his head but nodded still. His hands twitched away from his glasses as soon as he touched them, something only Russia noticed.

As America took them off and held them in his hands, staring down at them, Russia tried to discreetly move his hand from his pocket and rested it on his arm. America looked up at him for a second, before relaxing.

"Now, I want you both to look into this mirror," Wales handed the mentioned item to him. Hesitantly America took it but carefully kept the glass part away from his face.

"Imma level with ya, I really don't like seeing my eyes so can I ask why?"

"Mmhm. This mirror is enchanted with a healing property, so if it 'fixes' your wound then I know healing magic will work."

America blinked, suddenly remembering a similar mirror. He couldn't remember who held it, he knew it had to be someone important. One of the tribes maybe? Not the point, it was the fact that he saw his eyes. Normal, something he only had faint memories of now. Foreign ones to him, never in his lifetime has he ever seen them until that moment.

Taking a deep breath and bracing himself for the worst, America looked in the mirror.

It wasn't relief that washed over him, no, at that moment he realized it would've been more relieving if his eyes had stayed the same. But there they were. The natural white other countries had, along with red and blue iris. Inside the colors he noticed was small almost star-like sparkles.

No matter which set of eyes Russia gazed upon, cursed or normal, he still would have found the cosmos within them.

But why wasn't he happy? Or excited? Had he really gotten so used to the bad that simple normalcy frightened him? No, of course not, this is what he was trying to fight for. Right? He shouldn't be scared to be proven wrong. He should be happy.

He ran his fingers around the bottom crease of his eyelid, turning his head every which way to get a better look at his old eyes.

They weren't his. These were some past America's eyes. He's only ever known the black ones. Is that why he wasn't as happy as he thought?

"It works!" Canada exclaimed, leaning into America to look at his brother's mismatched eyes. "It's been so long I've forgotten what they looked like."

"They do fit you," Russia added, mirroring Canada's stance and leaning in to see the same reflection. He studied America's expression after pulling himself from the almost trance he went into

after staring at his lover's eyes. He seemed to be in shock. Nothing bad nothing good. Just processing.

They were beautiful. The little lights that twinkled, the faint shapes of stars in his irises. Cursed and not, he was beautiful.

Russia looked over to see Britain watching America closely too, and that's when he realized how close he was to him. His hand was resting on his thigh and he was practically cheek to cheek with him.

He quickly fixed that, trying to play it off as no longer curious. It wasn't certain if Britain even noticed, but he didn't want to take the risk.

"Good, so it works. Then healing magic is the route to take. I'll look into protection and warding just in case, though," Wales stood, heading to leave the room before stopping abruptly. "Oh! UN, he didn't answer, but I can try him again."

Britain nodded, knowing how difficult it can be to reach them sometimes. Whatever they busied themselves with they would most likely tell them all if it was necessary. For now, that was the least of his worries.

He looked to his sons as they both looked at their reflections. Canada looked to have gotten a major weight off of his shoulders, meanwhile America looked. . . Less enthusiastic than one would expect.

"America?" Britain asked. "Are you okay?"

"Hmm? Oh, yeah, yeah," America handed the mirror to Canada who took it without thought. "Just. Is it gonna work? I mean whatever healing mumbo-jumbo ya got cooking in a cauldron."

Wales raised a brow but shrugged it off. "Maybe. I can't promise anything, I mean this curse is different magic than what I know. Something that can work with European stuff might not work at all. It could very well make it worse, cure it completely, turn you into a chicken, or have no effect whatsoever."

"Thats comforting," Canada slowly put down the mirror, eyeing it

carefully.

"I'll have to see if someone knows anything about North American magic, that way I can have a better understanding of what I'm working with."

America nodded, finally relaxing his shoulders. There was the catch he was looking for. Now things felt normal.

"I wonder if my father had anything on the matter," Soviet thought out loud. The Russian Empire had talked with the tribes while America stayed with them. He had regular meetings with them in the beginning and even worked with the ones that lived more in the north. It was a long shot but maybe he had some books on the matter?

What was he saying, he wasn't going to help America. He's getting what he deserves, honestly, the only ones who should remove the curse should be the ones who placed it on him. He should face the consequences of his actions instead of hiding in fear.

He looked to Russia who seemed to be more interested in making sure his partner was okay.

Perhaps he should do what he thought, too. Not much he can do from where he stood anyways.

"Russia?"

Wales stood near the hallway to the back two rooms, remembering her bedroom door had a sturdy lock. She played with her hands and leaned towards the escape just in case something happened.

All Russia did was look up at her and raised a brow.

Forcing her hands still by her sides, Wales said, "I'm sorry if I offended you at all, earlier that's never gonna be intentions I promise."

Russia glanced to the side before looking back at her. He nodded. "I know, ma'am. I wasn't offended."

"Okay, good, cause I don't want you to think I would ever purposefully like hurt you, I would never in any way, I-I-"

"It's okay," Russia held up his open palm to stop her from rambling again.

"Good! Good, good, um," Wales rubbed the back of her neck, realizing she was very obviously nervous. Hopefully, he doesn't take offense to that, either. He has a stare that can just burn a hole right through you.

"Um, I-I actually have an annotated book of his, if- if you want I can like give it to you. It's not much, and the book has really dated information anyways, I don't really need it anymore."

"You have something of my fathers?" Russia stood quickly, adrenaline suddenly rushing from his chest at the mention of that.

Wales jumped back at his reaction and started to frantically shake her hands in front of her. "No, no, I mean, yes, yes, I-I do! I do, I just didn't you know take it, I mean I did, but I didn't like steal it from him, I got it after he passed, I mean."

Russia blinked. She's scared, take a step back and try not to look too intimidating.

"May I see it?" He tried to soften his voice and moved as little as possible.

Wales nodded quickly before spinning on her heels to lead the way to her small office. Russia walked lightly behind her, trying not to move as fast as he wanted.

Britain sighed when the two left the room. His mother was easy to startle, but Russia did not need to be glaring at her the entire time. She didn't mean anything by bringing up the Soviet Union, she just has quite the passion for unifications.

He told the boys they should be getting ready to leave soon, that he had some things to do later today he didn't want to be late for. So they gathered their books and took care of their cups and saucers.

The office was a small one, but it seemed so much smaller with the looming presence of the son of the former union in it with Wales.

She moved quickly, grabbing the old and weathered book off the self of one of the bookcases. She liked the setup of her small office, it matched well with her home. It was a small cabin-styled house, surrounded by a small garden with a moss lawn in a clearing of trees. A darker cottage core was the esthetic Wales enjoyed, with vines along the house, small potted plants on the inside, and other earthy decors.

But in the office in front of her oak desk, there was a matching wooden display case sandwiched between two bookshelves. Through the glass case, you could see a display of preserved forest animals, along with pinned insects and butterflies. One shelf inside was a display of animal skulls she had found in the woods by her house and cleaned off.

Russia admired the collection for a moment before taking the mentioned book. It was printed in Russian, and when he opened the book to see the pages he looked in the margins of the text. There written in pen and sometimes pencil was the handwriting of his father. He wrote in cursive a lot, as he was told it was hard to read by others.

"It was kind of difficult to translate what he wrote, but I got it. I mean, you don't need me to give you the English versions of what he wrote, but I just. I don't know, I don't need it and never use it anymore, cause like I said its all outdated information-"

"Wales, you don't have to be scared of me. I'm very happy you have this."

"I . . . Really?"

Russia nodded, flipping through the pages, and smiled. He was happy to have as many things from his father as he could. Plus, Wales looked like she was gonna pass out from hyperventilating.

"Da. Is this the only thing you have of his?"

Wales nodded. "Sorry, wish I could give you more. But, but your father was smart, and he-he was onto something. All I got from those notes was what I was talking about earlier—which I-I'm so sorry about, by the way."

Russia closed the book, keeping his head low, and nodded.

"May I ask you something?"

"Yes! You can ask anything you need, what- what is it? Do you need something? Like, I have more enchanted items, smaller ones, I mean, I do have more books on unifications, if-if you need the one Britain has you can ask him, or-or I can buy you another copy-"

"Wales, Wales, none of that," Russia grabbed her frantically waving hands. He held her still for a moment and she tensed, but relaxed when Russia didn't attack her. "I wanted to ask if you knew of a castle in the northern woods. Around my territory, a palace more like."

Wales thought for a moment before nodding. "I think, I think yeah. The Russian Empire, he had a palace. I thought your father had that destroyed, though, and-and I don't have anything from it."

"Don't you dare tell her about that place," Soviet warned, resting his hand on Russia's shoulder.

"No, I just." Russia paused, not wanting to give away any information that could be important. "I just thought you might know something about it. I've seen pictures and it looked . . . Cool I think is a good word. That's all."

"Oh, yeah, it was cool. Your grandfather did like to have his parties, he would constantly rival other Empires in them."

Russia nodded, finding himself a little surprised by that. His father had told him that RE was not a people person, and hated socializing. It was a common trait in their family, Russia had always assumed. His father wasn't a people person, either. And neither was he.

"I wish I could give you more information on him, I barely met him

I'm afraid."

"It's okay, my father never liked to talk about him," Russia gave a half-hearted smile, hoping to further ease the smaller countries' nerves. "I am very happy with this," he tucked the book under his arm, "thank you."

"Of course! That was all I had for you, if you'd like we can head back out to the living room."

Russia nodded, leading the way this time. He was mildly relieved when he noticed everyone was getting ready to leave. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Wales relax, slouching more and letting her wings drag behind her on the floor.

"Thank you for everything mother," Britain said standing outside of the front door. Wales looked past her to see Canada and Russia helping America to the car.

"I can give you a small biscuit really quick for America as something extra. The tea should help heal him, and keep you all from getting sick for about three weeks, too."

"Did you add a healing potion to our tea?"

"Yes, just a small bit. l do that every time you come over."

"That explains a little. However, America should be okay. The tea should be enough with some rest. Plus, he'll stay home, so one less thing to worry about."

Wales nodded. "I suppose that's true. I'll see you next week, yes?"

"Unless there's another emergency," Britain nodded, adjusting the books he held for everyone. "Let's pray not, hmm?"

With a chuckle, Wales nodded. "I'll see you soon, son. Love you."

"I love you too, mother. Thank you again."

Wales waved bye to the ones in the car before closing the front door. Britain set down the small stack of books in the passenger's

seat before starting the car.

"You all settled?"

"Da."

"Yeah."

"Can we stop at McDonald's on the way back? I think Jamaica is working today and I wanna say hi."

"No, son, you can text him."

"Yeah, but he gets me free food."

"You have free food at the house."

America huffed and crossed his arms, looking out the window on Russia's side. "Yeah but it's not McDonald's."

Britain ignored him and began the drive home. Russia moved his hand slightly, just enough for him to brush lightly against America's thigh. After a moment of confusion, America got the hint and he set his arms down by his side, resting one hand on Russia's. He smiled to himself, knowing that Russia had wanted to hold his hand. He was adorable.

Soviet however wasn't too pleased to have books in his seat. He would have to deal with it he supposed, so he sat relatively uncomfortably. It's not like he had any other choice.

Well.

Soviet looked around himself as if everyone was going to magically see him just because he decided to do something out of his comfort zone. Of course, no one did, so he closed his eyes and mimicked the movements of taking a deep breath. He let go of his focus on staying seated and as soon as he did, he felt the whole car pass through him.

Soviet floated in the air as if he was on an invisible chair. That startled him and as soon as he noticed he fell from his nonexistent

seat and landed on the road.

The car he was just in kept going further down the road and Soviet simply waited for something to happen. He had always felt a certain pull or push whenever his journal was moved around or grew further away. Soviet felt the same feeling now, too. The pull in his chest slowly grew stronger, and he caught himself starting to walk in that direction.

He forced his feet still and waited in place. To further showcase his resilience he decided to sit down in the middle of the road, turning his back to the car. Everything inside him screamed to get up and go, every molecule he supposed he must've still had was upset to be this far away from his anchor.

The tug in his chest violently yanked him back, the pull so strong he was airborne for a second. He landed on his back, and if he could feel proper pain that would've hurt like a bitch.

"Блядь, (fuck)" Soviet mumbled, rubbing the back of his head. He knew he didn't have a wound but it still was somewhat disorienting. His head grew fuzzy and he was worried he was going to pass out into the void again.

Instead, once he opened his eyes he noticed he was in fact being dragged along the road. He was barely sitting up and he could see everything zoom past him. It was a long and straight road, so he could see the car still. It was relatively far away, perhaps less than a kilometer.

He found the limit.

Growing increasingly tired, Soviet decided to lay down fully and let himself be dragged behind the car. He hoped just resting would help him get some of his energy back. It wasn't until he realized he was on the verge of fading into the void again did he sit up and thought that maybe being this far for long amounts of time wasn't good. He shut his eyes to try and. focus on appearing close by his journal again.

He had some practice in appearing by his journal without having to

walk there, hopefully, he had enough strength to do it again.

He imagined himself sitting in the seat he had left, focusing on the feeling of those books inside of him and most importantly the tie he had to his journal. That pull, the pull that he had no choice but to follow. The pull that kept him grounded, secure in this plane of existence. That was more important than any annoying stack of books.

The feeling of butterflies filled his stomach and spider-webbed their way around his form. He opened his eyes once again and found himself inside the car, the tugging inside him suddenly gone and replaced instead with the prickling of disturbance in his lower half from the books he was sitting through.

He hated that feeling.

When they arrived home, Canada jumped at the chance to help his brother before Russia could. He wanted to talk to America before he went to hide away in his room with him. It wasn't that he had anything wrong with him, no the country stopped giving him dirty looks after getting used to the idea that he was dating his sister.

At first, he was worried about it being seen as a lesbian relationship and worried about him possibly being transphobic and homophobic.

Now he knows it was more about being a protective older brother and his semi-hatred of America and anyone affiliated with him.

"America, can I talk to you about something?" Canada asked, his arm around America as he unsteadily walked up the driveway.

"Yeah, yeah, totally, I have something to tell you, too," America smiled, glancing up at Russia who walked ahead to open the front door for everyone. He had to knock and wait for someone on the inside to open it, but he figured he'd find that out once he got there.

"Oh, um," Canada paused for a second. "You go first then."

"Okay, but you can't tell dad, okay? Not cause of me, I didn't do anything this time."

"Uh-huh."

"Hey! I didn't! Honest. No, no, it's that," America leaned in Canada more, lowering his voice and making sure their father didn't turn back to look at them. "Me and Russia are dating."

"Wait, really?" Canada raised his brow, looking up at the mentioned country. He was standing at the front door looking back at everyone as he waited for someone to answer his knocks.

"Yeah, dude! But, you have to promise not to tell anyone. He's not comfortable with a lot of people knowing yet, he hasn't really come out to anyone other than like me and technically those tribes."

Canada held out his pinkie and America took it in his.

"Awesome, 'cause dude I'm so fucking excited now. Like finally something goes my way, huh?" America smiled, looking up at his boyfriend as he waved to him. France was standing by the door with him and Britain and they looked to not be so concerned with how far back the two brothers were.

"What was your thing?"

"Hmm?"

"The thing you wanted to tell me?"

"Oh um," Canada weakly smiled, adjusting his arm around America. He looked at how he limped, still managing to take a few good steps at a time before his knees shook and he leaned against Canada for more support. Maybe he would've been better if they didn't have to walk up an incline. But still. He hasn't seen his brother smile like this during moments like these in a very long time. He was happy, despite everything.

Canada looked at America's glasses and saw his own eyes.

"Oh, I just. Wanted to know if I could borrow a pair of your sunglasses. If you have any extra, that is."

"Yeah dude of course. I can grab you one when I get up there."

The two walked up the stairs to the front door, Russia meeting them halfway to help America. He got to the top when he decided he should get onto Russia's back for convenience's sake.

Canada stayed by the front door once they got inside. He heard Britain and France talking about something but didn't pay attention to what they were saying. He just stood and watched as America laughed about something with Russia as he carried him up the stairs to his room.

He wanted to talk to him. Tell him how horrible he's been feeling. To find out how America coped with everything, or even just what he might know to make things easier. Maybe that's why it hurt to see him just laughing without a care in the world. Didn't he care how his brother felt in all this?

No, he can't think like that. That's not fair. America has been through worse, it's not right to be upset with him because he didn't get something like attention. And he can't expect him to just know or to drop something that would make him happy just to listen to Canada whine.

Just because he can doesn't mean everyone else could.

He'll be fine anyways. He's happy his brother is happy.

Canada didn't want to admit it, but a small part of him wasn't.

That part he ignored, it wasn't like him to feel resentful over someone else's happiness. Especially America's.

"Dad, mom?"

"Yes, sweetie, what is it?" France asked, trying her best to not avoid eye contact.

"Can I stay at Mexico's for a night?"

France looked to Britain who pursed his lips, trying to think of a way to let his son down gently.

"I don't know, I'm not so sure if it's safe for you right now."

"Mexico already knows about everything, I told him when he was over here a while ago. If anything happens I'll come right back home, I promise, no hesitation."

"Mexico already knows?"

"Only about me!" Canada quickly said. "He freaked out a little when he saw my eye, but he hasn't told anyone. I trust him, and he doesn't know about America or anything else."

Britain was taken aback by this information, he didn't know what to say. It was obvious enough for France because she spoke for them both. "Well, we trust you son. If you need to spend some time with a friend, then of course. Just be careful and text us when you get there and if you leave to go somewhere with him, okay?"

Canada nodded, hugging France tightly, and quickly ran up the stairs.

Canada could always count on Mexico. If he wasn't going to find comfort in his brother, then maybe he would in his best friend. He hated feeling discarded or forgotten, and more than anything he just really didn't want to be alone right now.

Mexico agreed to have Canada over, it was family movie night with his siblings and they got along well with him. Agave loved being put on his shoulders and being taller than his siblings. Luna loved that Canada distracted Agave so he could leave her alone.

Before Canada left, America gave him a pair of sunglasses. One for now and one in case those broke. He was giving him his only extra pairs, but since America was going to be staying home it wasn't a worry of his. He knew sometimes stuff can happen and sunglass can break, especially when you wear them constantly so having the backup one always calmed down any anxiety. He knew it would do the same for Canada, too.

"Thanks," Canada had said with a smile he hoped didn't look forced. He was thankful, he really was. It just felt like a hollow effort.

Maybe all he needed was a break. Take his mind off of stuff like

America was doing. Then everything will be okay.

**I did not mean for this to be like 1,4000 words but here we are. Ayyyye bitches some ghost Soviet content cause it's hilarious to me. Also, some history around Britain cause he's a bisexual disaster.**

**Anyways till next time ladies, lads, and nonbinary comrades,**

**Ësgöge'ae'**

**~Galaxy**

# First Time (Rusame Smut)

**Here you are you heathens. I might be getting a laptop soon which means it'll be easier to type and thank god I've been itching to keep writing but I can't focuse on it with my phone.**

**Narrator's POV**

Home alone and it was nothing like Kevin McCallister made it out to be.

Mainly because America wasn't fully alone and there wasn't two weird bandits trying to break in. Maybe he should set up those random traps though, it would be funny to see Zee or Australia stumble around covered in feathers and trip on marbles.

Maybe he'll leave the fire out of it. It might be too soon for Australia. New Zealand on the other hand. . .

America blinked and refocused himself on where he was. He wasn't in *Home Alone*, he was in his home. Alone. With Russia. His parents gone for the evening. His siblings gone for the night as well.

He couldn't help the dirty thoughts, especially when his head was resting on Russia's chest, the bigger country's arm around him with his hand on his hip. America was practically half laying on top of him, his arm outstretched to lay across Russia's stomach and one of his legs ontop of Russia's. America always felt rather small compared to him, so he always made up for it by having a bigger ego.

Bigger shadow trumps physical height right?

"Ruuuusssiaaaaa~" America purred, turning his head up.

Russia had been watching the TV, a spider man movie playing, so he debated for a second which one was more important to look at. He decided America, even if he did hesitate for a couple secounds.

"Hmm?" He hummed his questioning response.

"Kiss meeee," America pursed his lips and smacked them together to make little kissing noises.

Smiling at his little dumbass, Russia lifted America's chin with his free hand and leaned down to kiss him. He lightly pecked his partner's lips, thinking that was all he wanted. Instead he found America keeping their lips locked as he adjusted his position until he was cradling his lap. His arms wrapped around his neck and his fingers ran through his soft white hair.

Russia let out a sigh, dragging his own hands up America's sides. His fingers lifted his shirt and grazed America's bare sides. It wasn't on purpose, not at first but when Russia felt America smile and shiver lightly at his gentle touch, he repeated his motions. He moved slowly, testing how America reacted to his touch. If he dragged his fingers across his skin lightly, he would squirm a little.

Focusing on how America moved caused him to neglect the kissing aspect.

So, America grabbed Russia's hair close to the roots and he tugged his head back. Russia gasped, eyes widening with surprise and a deep blush spreading across his face. He blinked a few times, trying to calm his rising pulse.

"You look so cute from here, Ruski~"

Russia furrowed his brows in a pout and moved his head from America's hold. He was let go of without resistance, but only cause America saw his exposed neck to be a good way to start.

It was another startled noise that America recieved when he kissed the crook of Russia's neck. He left little small kisses, making Russia turn his head and expose more skin for him, just as he wanted. He wanted to tease Russia, drag it out maybe as a small form of revenge. It didn't matter why, America just knew he liked when Russia squirmed.

It was when a low groan laced with eagerness escaped Russia's lips

did America start working on leaving a hickey.

*Remember to keep them low*, America reminded himself, resisting the urge to go higher and mark all of Russia's neck.

He was happy he could have the Russian all to himself, just a little miffed he can't show him off.

"Ahh~" Russia grabbed the back of America's shirt, twisting the fabric in his hands.

America refrained from chuckling and made quick work with his own hands, lifting Russia's shirt up enough for him to slip them under.

He couldn't stop his chuckle when he heard Russia shudder.

"Am," Russia's words melted into another low moan. He wanted to say something, whatever it was Russia had no idea, but its importance wasn't high enough for him to try to remember. Instead, he pulled at America's shirt, tugging it up to take it off of him.

"If I'm loosing mine," America sat up, legs straddling Russia's crotch, and pulled his shirt off. He tossed it to the floor, and started to lift Russia's shirt up as he continued, "You're loosing yours."

Russia nodded, eyes half lidded and quickly helped America be rid of his own shirt.

"No complaints from me," he said, tossing his shirt as well. He looked up at America to see what his next moves where. He wasn't sure how far he wanted to take things, but the thought of loosing clothes wasn't sounding too bad.

It seemed like he was thinking the same thing, those piercing black eyes looked down at him, scanning his body up and down. He was aware America admired how fit he kept himself, something Russia was proud of as well. He was thankful for his fathers genes, otherwise he would have to work twice as hard with all the alcohol he drank.

America wasn't built like Russia, he was small in stature and height

and he had a bit of a stomach to him. He clearly didn't care, very obviously so with his love of crop-tops and how he would wear more revealing and tight fitting clothing on occasion. Russia liked seeing him without his shirt. He had a few scars on his chest and faint ones on his arms, a common sight with longer lasting countries.

"You look good from here," America lightly traced his finger around Russia's abdomen.

"I could say the same," Russia replied, trying to mimick the same smugness but his hesitation ruined it.

He was incredibly nervous and both of them could tell.

America smiled, looking at the hickies at the base of his neck and collar bone, scanning down Russia's bare chest. His hair was ruffled up, spread out on the pillow and his shoulders, his chest was rising and settling with each quick breath and he could feel a slight buldge in the jeans he was cradling.

"Heh," America rolled his hips.

"Ahh!" Russia gasped, his fist grabbing the bed sheet. Quickly he could feel his face burn. He hadn't meant to be loud, but it had clearly amused the one on top of him.

"That was cute, Ruski. What, did you like that?" He repeated the motion and Russia was able to control himself. He moaned softer and lower, but held his gaze. Even though it was easy to tell America was running this show, he knew he would never hear the end of it if he was the submissive one.

He was going to try his absolute best to keep America from growing more cocky than he already was.

"Ruuuuskiii~" America purred. He noticed how Russia's eyebrows where furrowed in frustration and how even the blue on his face was turning a deep shade of red. His legs shifted around, trying to get a little bit of stimulation he assumed. Either way, the poor country looked ready to explode. Or ready to tear the sheets from

how hard he was hanging onto them.

"Relax," America ran his hands up Russia's chest, pressing down slightly, then dragged them back down to his groin.

*That was the opposite of relaxing,* Russia thought. He watched America's hands play at the waistline of his jeans then move to the button and zipper. His hands trembled slightly and when he tried to pull on the button it was like his fingers couldn't hold enough strength.

Russia sat up slightly, propping himself on one arm and using the other to grab America's wrist. "You're still sore we shouldn't do anything."

"Yeah well I'm horny and so are you so that doesn't matter," America laughed but it was laced with agitation. Unbottoning jeans shouldn't be hard, it was like Russia was wearing a damn chastity belt and he intended to rip it right off.

"America, I don't want you to strain yourself."

"You're right, can you do this for me?"

Russia raised a brow but then shook his head. Still he sat up a little more and let go of Americas wrist to unzip his pants. "Alright. But, but what where you planing on doing? Like what exactly?"

"Well," America watched him as he undid his jeans. "I can't do anything strenuous so I guess railing you is out of the question."

"Heh, I don't think I'm exactly ready for that yet. Even if I was it would be the other way around."

"Well, I guess we'll have to see about that, hmm?"

America leaned forward and kissed him, grabbing his hands in the process. He placed them on his own jeans, guiding Russia's fingers to his zipper.

He pulled away from the kiss for just a moment to say, "Do you mind undoing mine, too? I'm toooooo weak."

Russia complied, even if he did roll his eyes quickly before doing so. He tried not to think too much about it, which was incredibly hard. That wasn't the only thing that was hard by the feel of it.

"What are you okay with doing?"

"Hmm?" Russia snapped his head up. Much too fast, he thought. Calm your nerves or else you'll never hear the end of anything.

"Oh," the question he had asked finally processed. "Um, I don't know. I know the stuff we've done before I'm okay with."

"Like me pinning you down and giving you hickies?" Amercia teased.

Russia nodded and looked away for a moment before forcing himself to turn back. "D-da. Da, erm. That, da. But I'm not sure how I feel about going, I guess. . . all the . . . Way?"

America nodded, taking Russia's hands in his. "It's okay, there's other stuff we can do, ya know. Like, here–" he moved back a little and gently pushed Russia down onto the bed "–lay down, and take off your pants."

Russia raised a brow, but did as told. America moved off of his lap for a moment to let him and so he could take off his own jeans. Once he did he tossed them to the side with his and Russia's shirts. Never did he want to look away from his boyfriend as he undressed. Now in nothing but his underwear, he was a sight to see.

"Now what?"

Obedient as ever.

"Now," America crawled over him on his hands and knees. Russia swallowed. He watched his partner line up his hips with his and then rolled them against each other.

Russia moaned lowly, bucking his hips up to keep his pleasure going.

"Heh, yeah I knew you'd like that."

"Shut up."

For once America listened, focusing on rubbing himself agasint Russia. He could feel his member pressing against him and was excited by not only the length but the girth. He knew he was big, he had a small taste of it at Germany's party, but damn.

A few soft quiet moans came from Russia and his eyes fluttered closed.

Oh hes gonna have a lot of fun when he can go all the way with him. If just simple dry humping got him all worked up like this, he cant wait to see the absolute mess he can become once he rails him like there's no tomorrow. Just the image of Russia tied down and whimpering or moaning like he was now made him not want to wait.

But he would. The poor baby gay probably hasn't stuck anything up there yet, he would have to take his time. Unless he was a masochist and wouldn't mind the burn.

Russia moaned a little louder when America pushed his hips down harder.

"America~," Russia's hands found their way to the said countries shoulders. He began to slightly push America back and forth, trying to help him move a little bit faster. He was trying hard not to get too excited, he knew he wanted to be gentle with America since he was hurt.

"Someone's, eager," America teased, his voice laced with cockiness.

Maybe he could handle a little bit of roughness.

As America slowly leaned down to kiss him, Russia grabbed his face and pulled him down qucikly. He kissed him hard, grabbing his hair and wrapping it around his fingers.

America barely had time to protest before his head was tugged back and Russia sank his teeth into his neck.

"Ahh!~ Russia, hold on there, you're gonna,"— He moaned when

Russia sucked and bit— "fuck, you're gonna get me into a different mood here, Ruski."

"Thats what I want," Russia whispered in his ear. His hot breath sent a shiver down America's spine. Oh God, his voice was so fucking hot.

*No*, America thought. Stop that, that's a gateway to being a bottom. He's a top, fuck that.

"Heh," America pulled himself free from Russia's hold and lifted himself back up onto his hands. He saw the slight smile on Russia's lips, his eyes narrowed up at him. The little shit. "I'm not a bottom, Ruski."

Without hesitation, Russia grabbed America's wrists and pushed him down onto the bed. He held them next to his head, using his legs to spread America's.

"I'll make you one," he said, stealing America's previous cocky smile.

*Holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck holy fuck,* was the only thought in America's head. *Who taught him that, why was that hot, fuck.*

Russia let go of America's wrist and traced his fingertips up his arm and to his chest. He noticed that his partner was almost in a paralyzed shock, looking down at his hand with a bright red marking his cheeks. He made no snarky comments, only breathed heavily as Russias hand traveled down further.

Once he reached America's waist line, Russia played with the elastic lining of his boxers.

"You going to behave?" He asked in a low voice, holding eye contact once America could bring himself to look up at him.

Confused and aroused, America slowly nodded.

"Good boy."

America shifted, trying to close his legs to hide his erection but Russia was making sure he couldn't. Fuck, he might be a switch.

Fuck this is hot.

The Russian's huge form over him, pining him down and keeping him open, his voice is fucking hot, his accent, oh god he's a switch. With a praise kink. Fuck.

Russia moved his hand and began to rub his palm over America's clothed dick. He traced the outline with his fingers, moving his hand up and down, slowly jerking him off through the loose fabric.

"Fuck, Russia~" America moaned as he slowly started to move his hips up to meet Russia's hand.

The thought of ripping his boxers off and penatrating him then was incredibly tempting to Russia but he knew better. Be gentle, he's sore and he wasn't even ready yet. That was just the horny talking.

"Your moans sound краси́вый (beautiful)," Russia kissed America's chest.

America's precum was felt through his boxers and Russia knew what he was doing and what he was saying was working. Thank god. He was winging it and using things he heard in porn and had read.

The fabric dulled the sensation a little bit, but with Russia's large hand he could touch a lot more than America's own hand ever could.

"Fuck, what do I have to say to get you to fuck me," America's voice was strained and so was his attempt at a light laugh.

"That was fast," Russia teased, lifting his head to look down at America. "I thought you where top?"

"Oh, shut-" his defense was cut off by Russia kissing him. He felt Russia's hand let go over his member and he whined into the kiss, desperately bucking his hips against nothing.

Then he felt Russia grab his boxers seam and pull down, fully leaving him exposed. The cooler air met his skin and he almost shivered. Was Russia actually going to fuck him? Holy fuck, is he

even okay with that, he's never been a bottom before.

He inhaled sharply when he felt Russia's hand wrap itself around his dick and slowly started to move again.

Oh fuck, that felt so much better than before.

America moaned into Russia's mouth, who then took that opportunity to slip his tongue inside. He was fully welcomed by it, and America opened his mouth a little more for him.

He couldn't help but move his hips with Russias hand at that point, thrusting up as his hand moved down. His own precum acting as lubricant and allowing Russia to move his hand easily.

His groin burned and the thought of release became more prominent but Russia wasn't getting any stimulation. His one hand was jerking him off and the other was still on his wrist. He would be damned if he came before him, that was not allowed.

But Russia's hand moved faster and he couldn't hold back his moans. Everything about the situation felt so hot. The room felt hot, his palms felt sweaty, and he could hear how fast his breath had gotten, too.

America wrapped his legs around Russia's waist, trying to pull him closer but he was too weak to manage anything other than a simple nudge. His legs shook, and he couldn't tell if it was just because he was sore or because of what Russia was doing to him.

Oh god he was made to be submissive. Oh fuck, he could care less right now. That's a future America problem. Now America felt amazing with it.

Russia pulled away from his lips and almost attacked his neck instead. He bit hard into the skin and sucked, to which America almost yelled out his moan. That hurt, but it hurt so fucking good.

He felt Russia lay his chest on top of his as he left more hickes around his neck and closed his grip around his cock. It felt so warm, he wanted more.

America ripped his wrist free from Russia and wrapped his arms around his neck.

"Oh, fuck, Russia stop, I'm gonna cum."

"Nyet," Russia said as he sucked at a sweet spot in America's neck.

"Fuck~," America moaned, digging his nails into Russia's back. He wanted to stop only for Russia, but if Russia wasn't gonna stop then neither was he.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, Ruski~" The heat started to build in his groin. "Don't stop. Ahhhh~"

"Anything you want любимая моя (my love)" Russia laid his accent on thick, knowing America loved it.

America's moans got louder and closer together and his hips moved faster. He was getting closer to release with each thrust, Russia knew.

"Russia~ Oh fuck, Russia!~ I'm gonna- Russia, I'm gonna—," his words failed him and they broke with a loud moan. He dragged his nails down his back, pulling Russia as close as he could as he came over both their stomachs.

"Fuck, Russia~" He moaned, still moving his hips as he rode out his release.

Russia loosened his grip and kept his hand still, allowing America to stop when he needed.

"Fuck," America muttered repeatedly as he tried to catch his breath.

That had seemed to become his favorite word of the night.

Russia was admittedly happy with himself. Hearing America moan his name and feeling his release was a pleasure he never imagined he would enjoy, and yet here he was. Looking down at his marked up neck, his reddened face and splatters of white on his stomach. Just his expression alone made him want to do it all again. How his eyes where closed from the pleasure, and how his mouth was agape

trying to calm his breathing.

*He was beautiful*, Russia smiled.

He leaned down, carefully letting go of his softening dick and kissed him lightly.

*Be gentle with him*, he reminded himself.

America moaned into the kiss, something Russia could get used to.

The two sat up, America pushing on Russia's chest. Once they where upright, America shoved Russia onto his back and grabbed his underwear, practically ripped it off.

"America, what are you-"

Russia didn't have time to finish his sentence. America had grabbed the base of his still hard cock with one hand and swallowed the rest with his mouth.

"Ahhh!~" Russia shot his head back.

He grabbed America's hair to try to slow him down at least, but America wasn't letting him. He quickly bobbed his head up and down, letting his tongue lick up his shaft and twirl around the tip. He would suck on it for a secound before quickly moving all the way back down, stopping at his hand.

He was determined to fit all of Russia in his mouth, he just needed to get used to it for a secound.

"Ahhh~ Ame~ Mmmmmmmm~"

Russia stopped trying to slow him down and instead ran his fingers through his hair. He let his moans slip past his lips, not fully realizing he was. America's mouth was warm and wet and felt ungodly good. He's never gotten head before and never cared to, but now he thought that was a shame.

America moved his hand and pushed his head all the way down. At the same time, Russia bucked his hips up.

A loud gagging noise startled Russia for a secound and he said, "Shit, sorry, are you okay?"

He propped himself up one arm to look down at America and when he did he couldn't look away. He had looked up at Russia, a mixture of precum and saliva dripping from his tounge with a thin strand connecting it to his tip.

It was an arousing and lewed sight, one that made him grasp the sheets and have his dick twitch.

America smiled, licking his lips then kissed the head of Russia's dick.

Russia inhaled deeply and turned his head away.

"Nuh huh, Ruski."

Russia glanced back at him.

"I didnt say you can turn away."

It took him a secound but Russia did turn back to look down at America nuzzling his cock.

"Good. I want you to watch what I can do to you."

With that America took his full length in his mouth and gagged again. Russia instinctively grabbed his hair to pull him up. America just went back down again, grabbing Russia's wrist to make him push him up and down.

He got the message then.

Russia intertwined both his hands in America's hair and grabbed onto the roots, pushing him up and down as he wished.

Hearing the slurps and gaggs turned him on more and he started to move America faster.

He was thick and America could feel his head hit the back of his throat. He fucking loved it. Russia was so worried about treating

him softly, but he just wanted him to fuck his mouth senseless. It's not like he was made of glass.

"Ame~"

There he goes.

His moans where so hot. He felt his hair get pulled tighter as Russias grip got stronger. America knew he was gonna start to get really rough, and he was ready. He wasn't going to let himself cum like that and leave Russia without a good something special.

"Ahhh~"

Russia started bucking his hips up again to meet America's mouth. The gags that worried him became a sound he craved.

The fire in his core got hotter as his movements got faster.

"Am-Am-America. It feels- Ahhhh!~"

Fuck yes.

America wrapped his arms around Russia the best he could and closed his eyes. He didn't realize he had tears in them until he felt them run down his cheeks.

Russia's thrust got sloppy, hard and desperate. His moans matched, increasing in volume with each hit into the back of America's throat. It seemed to tighten around him, milking him of his release.

"AAAhhhhhhhh~" Russia came, his seed shooting down America's throat. Having no other choice, America quickly swallowed it as it came, coating his throat.

After a few secounds he let go of Americas hair and he quickly pulled himself off, taking in deep breaths. He wiped his mouth free of his saliva and drops of Russia's cum, licking them off his fingers.

"You okay?" Was the first thing Russia asked once he caught his breath.

America chuckled. "Yeah, I'm okay Ruski."

Russia sat up, cupping America's cheek with his hand and kissed him. He could faintly taste his own cum in America's mouth and was momentarily weirded out.

"Your throat," Russia spoke through kisses, "I didn't mean to-"

"Oh shut up, Ruski. I'm okay, okay?"

Russia nodded.

"What you can do is," America cleared his throat. "Get me some water or something, my throat is kind of sore."

Russia nodded and quickly stood, pulling his boxers back up and grabbed his pants.

"You know, you sounded really nice moaning my name like that~"

"I could say the same to you."

America smiled at his response. He didn't want to press on, otherwise he might bring up the bottom vibes he had while pinned under him. Not his fault, doesn't mean he is one. Nothing wrong with loving a big Russian over you and making you feel good. He could've flipped him around at any time.

Russia put his pants on and went downstairs, grabbing them both something to drink. Once he got back upstairs America was laying in bed in a baggy t-shirt and clean underwear. He downed the cup of water, and as soon as he could he snuggled up against Russia.

Their movie was still playing, and America hadn't cared to notice until now. No matter, he's seen this movie like three times anyways.

Now with a clearer head, Russia felt embarrassed after all that had happened. He thought he would be able to control himself during moments like those but it seems he was wrong. At least America enjoyed it. He was very cute under him. Seeing him squirm under his touch and dig his nails into his skin, it was all exciting.

They're definitely gonna do that more often now. Especially since the major bits of anxiety Russia felt about the subject calmed down.

Maybe next time he'll be ready to do more stuff.

**IVE BEEN BETRAYED MY FREIND SHOWED THIS TO A FAMILY MEMBER I HAVE TO DELETE THE AUTHORS NOTE**

**Till next time ladies, lads, and nonbinary comrades,**

**Ësgöge'ae'**

**~Galaxy**

# Nighttime Walks

**Man been about a year since I've updated huh. Yadda yadda I had to, anyways welcoming 2023 with this little ditty.**

America's POV

*Tap tap tap tap tap*

Footsteps echoed off the dark walls that surrounded me, almost as loud as my own. The walls were hard, a chipped-away stone that tore at my exposed skin and clothes.

I would open my mouth to yell but no sound would come out.

Endless corridors, faintly lit by dying torches. The smoke filled some halls and I ran through them blindly. I can't see anything, I can't breathe. I need to breathe. I need help. Where am I?

"America," a voice barely even a whisper blew past my ear.

I froze in my tracks and looked around.

Yells and shouts came from behind me, my pursuer's footsteps shaking the ground. The walls trembled, and a few stones fell around me.

I continued to run.

"Ameeeerica" it sent chills down my spine. "This way."

A wall crumbled and a cavern was exposed. It was dark but a breeze came from it. Outside? It had to be, the air didn't smell musty or faintly like copper. It smelled of grass and pine.

Freedom.

"Hurry," The wind spoke.

I ran into the cavern without a second thought.

The ground gave way and the wind once a breeze became a roaring storm as it whistled past my ears. I tried to grab around me for something before I fell to the ground. If there even was one, around me as far as I could see was black.

The wind died down and it turned into barely understandable whispers.

I hadn't realized I was standing until I took a step forward. Solid ground. When did I land? How was I okay?

Two spotlights clicked on, the sound echoing around the pit I found myself in. They showed their light from the top down to me and I had to shield my eyes from the light. It blinded me for a moment, reflecting off the stone beneath me. I squinted my eyes to look around and there was still nothing but blackness everywhere.

A water-sloshing sound came from behind me and I spun around. A small light disappeared into the murky black water, leaving the only light the two spotlights above me. I looked down at my feet, or more accurately my knees. I stumbled back and realized the stone I had been standing on was actually dark water and it had soaked through my jeans and shoes.

The liquid was thicker than water I realized as I tried to walk around. And it was rising.

I scrambled towards where that light had been, desperate for something to latch on to. The spotlights followed me as I ran, so I wasn't even certain if was moving forward or not. The only confirmation I had was the water resistance that was starting to slow me down.

It was up to my thighs now.

I looked up at the light and I tried to call for help. As soon as I opened my mouth I started to cough. I clutched my stomach and started to throw up. Black liquid came from my mouth and it mixed into the rest that surrounded me.

I held my mouth closed with my hand and the feeling to throw up went away. But then my vision started to go black.

I blinked a few times and it started to slowly come back, liquid running down my cheeks.

I touched it with my fingertips and saw through blurry vision the liquid gathered on them.

I was crying the black liquid.

I looked up to the light again and held my mouth shut. The water was up to my waist. My black tears formed streams and dripped down my neck and into my shirt.

"Let go."

The wind was back.

I looked towards where it had come from. Nothing but black as far as the eye can see.

Then a figure started to emerge from the darkness. He stepped on the water, unbothered by the heavyweight it was putting on me. It rippled around his boots, confirming it was the liquid he walked on.

"Jesus?"

Up to my stomach now. I held my arms up to keep them from getting sucked under. Why was that my first thought?

I couldn't see his face. The spotlight casted a strong shadow over his features. He was a he, I could tell.

He walked closer to me.

Up to my chest now.

I wiped my eyes clear again, trying to see better.

He was right in front of me. His boots. Scratched and dirtied by wear and tear. They had a slight lift to them. Dark spots were

splattered around them.

Up to my neck.

I had no choice but to look up at his shadowed face. He didn't say anything there was no expression to read. He wore a coat of some kind, I have seen it before.

The water rose above my head.

I can't breathe.

My hands were above the surface still, and I grabbed onto the shadowed man's boots. They burned my hand, and the sound of my skin sizzling was heard through the water.

I gasped and let go. Water rushed into my lungs and I sank fully beneath the surface.

Swim!

My instincts screamed at me too late.

I kicked my feet and swam up, reaching my hand out to the man that stood above me. The light was above him now and I could only make out a silhouette. My palm touched something solid.

I couldn't break through the water's surface.

Breathe.

I need to breathe.

I screamed with no air in my lungs and pounded a fist on the invisible wall that was keeping me from breaking through the water.

Let me out let me out, please!

The man stood still, looking down at me. He hadn't moved at all. Could he even see me?

Air I need air.

My vision darkened and my throat tightened. I could feel the liquid inside of me, pulling me further down. I kicked hard to stay where I was. But my efforts had slowed. It was getting harder.

Two figures came from the shadows and stood in the light a few feet behind the first man. I yelled out, my voice quieter than before. The only one that moved was the women. She looked in my direction and moved closer to me. I could make out her dress and braided hair.

Haud.

I tried to swim to her but I was forced still.

She stopped looking around and chose to stay still instead. She can't hear me anymore.

The light got brighter out of nowhere and it started to blur the edges of the three figures.

The two behind the first started to change. Something big formed behind them and slowly started to rise.

Wings. Black wings.

They rose and stretched to their fullest extent, Hauds significantly bigger than the other figures. Feathers hung loosely from theirs, falling occasionally. They landed on the water and dissipated, turning into the same liquid that surrounded me.

"Black wings," a forgotten women's voice echoed in my head. Who had said that to me? So long ago.

I began to sink down.

"Fighting" she echoed again.

I kicked my legs once more, one last feeble attempt.

"A lost boy."

The dark consumed me. I couldn't even tell if I closed my eyes.

Goosebumps ran down my back and I saw through murky water a golden light behind me.

Then a small hand grabbed mine from behind.

Then I woke.

I quickly lifted my head, immediately regretting it once the dizziness set in.

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmggggg," I groaned, rubbing my neck and back. God they hurt. Fucking didn't sleep right, did I?

I blinked away the rest of my sleepiness and tried to gather my surroundings. My hands were set on the lone kitchen table, but there was no light on.

There was no one else in the room. I was sitting alone in the dark.

"Huh." I hummed and looked around even more confused. "Fuck, am I sleepwalking again?"

I rubbed my temples and stood from my chair. I was still in the clothes I wore yesterday, having fallen asleep in them.

My little night with Russia had been almost a week ago now. He was at home as far as he knew.

The last time I knew I had slept walk was when I was snowed in at Russias. It was probably related to my curse or whatever. It would explain my weird-ass dream, too. I think I had something similar then or was that a hallucination? I couldn't remember. Not right now at least.

A yawn escaped my throat, not that I was holding it back, and I stretched out my arms.

I wasn't sure anymore and my voice didn't hurt. Which was good. Would be a shame if I couldn't talk my boyfriend's ears off. Or whatever we have in place of them, whatever biology shit was weird I didn't pay attention then anyways.

Hehehe. My boyfriend.

With a dumbass smile that I personally wanted pattoned as mine, I went upstairs back to bed. Sleep evaded me for a few minutes but after a little bit of scrolling through my phone I passed out.

It's amazing what mindless shows on Netflix can do to you.

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"Hey, dipshit!"

"Hey jerk," Canada smiled back at me.

"So how was your date with Ukraine?" I caught up to my brother and immediately started harassing him about staying out late last night.

"I wasn't with Ukraine, she was busy," Canada nudged me with his side and I stumbled to stay on the sidewalk for a moment. "I was with Mexy dumbass."

"Oh well sooOOOoorry," I dramatically threw my head back and rolled my eyes. "How was your date with Mex then?"

"Heh, shut up. It was fun, we played paintball with his siblings and Luna kicked our asses."

"Naturally."

"But I came in second. We were gonna team up against Mex and Agave, but they said that would've been completely unfair."

"And?"

"And we did anyways. Me and Luna make a great team."

"Noted. When the next world war comes, I'll ask you two to be in the front lines with me then," I joked, getting a gasp and stifled laughter from Can.

"You can't joke about that you idiot," he said as he shoved me,
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hitting me with his elbow. It hurt but I laughed anyway.

"What, I already make jokes about pearl harbor, and the shit afterward," I laughed.

Canada couldn't hold back his laughs, even if he did try. Ahhhhh little bit of dark humor is all, and besides I could've gone a whole fucking lot darker.

But figured that wasn't the time.

Canada had been stressed like nothing lately. He didn't even want to attend his assigned classes, much less the ones he chose to take. Not since his eyes had changed.

But today I got him to go. As long as I went with too. All I was hearing nonstop was "where have you been", "you asshat you can't skip what UN assigns you" or "did you at least do the work we sent you?".

Not even a welcome back. Then again South wasn't there. And I have no clue if Japan was, she usually would pop out of nowhere if she was.

At least Russia was happy to see me. He finished most of his shit as far as I could tell or dropped them like me.

I only had one class with him which sucked ass. It was science, of course. Specifically astronomy. Our favorite.

After that, I decided to ditch again. I mean I waited around nearby, just mostly fucking about so I can walk home with Canada.

Besides, if UN wanted me to attend classes they would have to force my ass personally. I already knew everything anyways.

"It's your responsibility as a powerful country to keep your information up to date." They would say, I knew it.

"I'm older than you, bitch," I would retort back.

Then fireworks go off in the background and I walk away with

Liberty in the background soaring over me. Cue eagle screech. Or the sound everyone thinks an eagle makes. I switched the sounds a long time ago as a joke and now everyone thinks that's what they actually sound like. That's what freedom sounds like.

I can never let anyone know the truth.

Oh god, I have to pray I can keep this up.

". . . go over to hang out with Kaz today and I wanted to know if you wanted to tag along?"

"Huh?" I turned my head to Canada. Oh, fuck he was talking. Okay, process the end. You can play this off. Process, process. "Oh shit, yeah, yeah, if ya don't mind I wanna go bother Russia. Remind him I destroyed his dad in the space race."

"His dead dad?"

"Yesser."

"The one he misses a lot?"

"Does he have any other?" I beamed a toothy grin and added a little pip in my step.

Canada shook his head, adjusting his custom-made sunglasses. They would hug his face better and make sure they didn't slide off. I caught my reflection in them and saw my one nearly matching pair.

Nearly matched cause they looked identical and not really something to gawk over but mine was better. By default.

"Anyone say anything?"

Canada caught my gaze and his smile shrunk.

"Not really–" he kicked a loose stone "–just yaknow, comments about me playing copycat or people worrying if I got punched is all. I just told them you gave them to me and they seemed to not really care that much."

"Yeah, it helps that some people are more worried about themselves looking out of place or weird to notice when you are ya know?"

He nodded and looked around. It wasn't that long of a walk to our place, and it wasn't too chilly either. The snow was gone and left with a little chill in the air.

Hmm.

"Hey, Can, have you noticed me sleepwalking?"

Canada thought for a second, after giving me a weird look, and shook his head no. "Not really. Why, have you been?"

"Eh, I just woke up at the kitchen table a few nights ago. Thought it was weird. Might've just like ya know, went downstairs to get a drink and fucking fell asleep at the table."

"Yeah, as far as I know, no, you haven't. Why, is that like a thing that relates to. . .," He didn't voice the last bit and instead decided to point at his sunglasses before adjusting them.

Everything I've been going through he very well might have to himself.

I shrugged. "I dunno, maybe? As far as I know no, but I honestly don't know."

That didn't ease Canada's nerves.

"Hey, well, I'll find out huh? I'll ask dad to keep an eye on me or something ya know?"

I got a nod from that at least.

Fuck should I make a dark joke again? Nah, not with his expression. It wouldn't land and that won't be good.

"Soooo whaddya gonna do with Kaz?"

He took the bait with little complaint. He explained that he and Kaz were gonna watch a new movie that came out and he was gonna

help him judge his best flying tricks. Then maybe go for a ride in the sky.

"You haven't been there since the thingy right?"

Canada nodded.

"Yeah. The *thingy*." The word rolled from his tongue as if he were spitting out poison.

We haven't really talked about it, not that I wanted to anyways. Ever since then there's just been an aura of hesitation around the subject. Who's gonna spill first? Who's gonna *break* first?

It certainly wasn't gonna be me.

"Look Ame, I don't know what's really going on either but I need to know you will promise to at least try to be honest with me about everything."

Canada stopped walking and stood, his stance sharp and straight. He gripped his bag straps, pulling them forward in tight hands. I could only see his lips and eyebrows clearly, but I knew from what I could see of his expression he was staring at me.

The street was fairly empty and we were almost home. I saw what looked like Spain and Portugal walking somewhere on the other side of the road further down. They were out of earshot, meaning they can't hear us but their shouts and whatever was loud enough for me to try to guess what they were talking about.

On our side, the sidewalk was bordered by trees and half-dead bushes with some traces of snow still on them. Up ahead was a path head with an accompanying sign that showed a map of all the trails that probably lead to the main clearing of the park.

I looked around once more before lowering my voice, "Can-can, dude, this is a more at home conversation if anything. Let's just get back and let me at least eat something before we get all heavy in this shit."

"No, 'cause then you will find a way to avoid me. You always do

that whenever we talk about stuff you don't like."

"Yeah, I get it I run from my problems but still, dude, we can talk when we get home."

I started to walk again, knowing Canada would give up easily to not be left behind.

It took a few seconds longer than I thought but I heard dragged feet start to slowly follow me.

"Why is it so hard for you to just say you promise?"

"It's not," I glanced back over my shoulder.

"Then do it!"

"Why? I tell you everything anyways."

"Then it shouldn't be hard to promise then huh?"

"Fine fine fine," I spun around on my heels to face Canada. He didn't even flinch. "If it'll make you shut up and at least wait until we get home I promise."

"To tell me everything?"

I nodded once, opened my mouth to say something then stopped.

"Did you hear that?"

Canada turned his head and nodded.

Two voices getting closer, coming from the path. They were laughing and half shouting. The spike of anxiety that shot through my gut melted into relief when I recognized who it was.

"It's just Japan and South, thank god."

Canada nodded and finally released his death grip on his bag straps.

The two mentioned countries came walking out of the path together as I hopped in front of them. "Hey South, wassup Japan," I held up

finger guns to point at them both.

Japan jumped like ten feet in the air, scrambling to hide behind South when she landed. She peaked over his shoulder, her tail puffed up and her ears flicked back.

"Whoa, Jesus didn't mean to scare you," I laughed. "What yall doing?"

South grabbed Japan's hand and had to pry her claws out of his shoulder sweater. "We were just walking around is all–Japan can you *please* let go–'cause she thought she saw something awhile ago."

"Oh? Was it Mothman? Or a ghoooOOOOOOoooost?" I teased Japan, wiggling my fingers around for dramatic effect. My added sound effects and usual rouse that gets at least a pity laugh didn't seem to have an effect on her this time. She still hid behind South, claws out, ears back and tail puffed and twitching. Her pupils were even slits, staring at me intently.

"Hey, are you okay?" Canada stepped forward, putting some distance between her and me. I watched her glance up at Can before back at me and then back at him. She swallowed the lump in her throat, and for the first time since I'd scared her, she took a breath.

"Ye-Yeah, Yeah, I'm totally fine, just absolutely fine, nothing wrong, just in a hurry, we gotta go bye!"

Japan yanked on South's arm and dragged him behind her as she scurried away.

"Japan! Hey, will, ag- Bye I guess!" South called to us as his feet scrambled to catch up.

"That was weird, wasn't it?" Canada raised a brow, watching the two leave.

I slowly nodded. "Yeeeah. Japan is always weird, but for her, yeah. I count that as strange."

"Do you think she?"

I looked up at him and saw he was pointing at his sunglasses.

"Nah, no. If she did, then everyone would know. That cat can't keep a secret to save her life. She's just been like that recently. I think because she probably knows me and Russia are boning."

"Thank you for information I didn't want," Canada shoved me away from him and started to walk home again.

I chuckled and hit his arm with my shoulder. "Hey, if I have to see you making goo-goo eyes at Mex or Kaz ever again imma puke."

"Oh my god, I don't do that!"

"You totally do."

"Shut up." He flicked my head and I swatted his hand away.

"Fine fine. Better not let Japan get too close then, 'cause dude she actually scares me."

"Isn't she harmless?"

I shook my hand from side to side as a way to say kind of. "Eh, like I don't think she's dangerous, but she doesn't understand that boundaries are a thing. It's funny until it goes too far and I don't think she knows when it is too far."

"Isn't it just a rumor that she stalks people?"

"Eeeehhhhh, yes and no. Pretty sure it's just one of those dark jokes you make between friends and you just keep playing chicken with it ya know?"

Canada shook his head no.

"Uh fuck, okay, it's like hey let's see how far we can take this joke until one of us taps out. Ya know, but all she does is like say I know where you are and occasionally sends a creepy picture for fun, but it's all just a joke."

"Doesn't sound like a joke to me."

We turned up our long ass driveway cause our dad sucked and doesn't think about having to walk with his bullshit fancy cars that he can drive up the damn hill. Ones that I might add, he won't let me borrow. Truly the worst part. I only crashed a car like twice I don't know why he doesn't trust me.

"We have a different sense of humor I guess. But if you say don't she won't. Like a while ago I told her to stop messing with me and Russia just because shit started to get personal. Haven't seen her stalking around since."

Canada nodded. "Still kind of weird."

"Oh yeah for sure," I agreed as we walked up the steps and to the front door. "But, we do have soul-sucking black eyes with an even darker ass past. I think we've done worse."

"Yeah,"–Canada held open the door for me– "but I think a key word to remember there is *past*. She did all this in the present."

"Touché."

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**Narrator's POV**

"We're never gonna do a chapter from my point of view are we?"

Japan and South sat in South's room, having hurried and caught a ride home. She insisted on getting safe behind enclosed walls as soon as possible.

Why? She didn't say.

"What was that?" South looked at Japan with yet another puzzled expression. His neko friend really had a habit of making him confused, more than half the time if he was honest.

"Oh, nothing. Just thinking out loud to this 'nonexistent' narrator that has it out for me."

"Riiiiight, the 'Narrator'," South put in air quotes. He's grown
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accustomed to the most recent of Japan's little eccentrics, the scenario that she can sometimes talk to a narrator like she was a character in a show or something. Her weirdness is part of why he liked her, so he thought it was funny and will occasionally play along.

However, this was not that occasion.

"Is this narrator the one that made you hallucinate?"

"No, and what I saw wasn't a hallucination!" Japan flopped herself onto South's bed, her face landing on his pillow. "Come on, you have to believe me, I know what I saw!"

"America? With black eyes?"

South leaned back in his chair, giving Japan a doubtful look.

Japan sat up quickly, angrily kicking the covers with her feet. "You believed me before!"

"No, you freaked me out with your crazy rants and I wanted no part of it," he corrected as he stood up to look at his friend. "You're lucky I agreed to go back to those trials with you."

Earlier, Japan had worn down South enough to where he finally agreed to go and "investigate" their mutual friend America. Ya know, behind his back.

"It's not like he hasn't done anything behind anyone's back before," Japan mumbled, making sure to keep it low enough for South not to hear.

They didn't find anything, even when they called in a favor to ASEAN for documents about America, they didn't find anything. They found an obviously murky history as with pretty much all countries so that's not news.

Seeing Japan hunched over, her legs to her stomach and her tail flicking back and forth, South shook his head. He grabbed the binder that Japan had come over with earlier that day and flipped through the pages.

"Here, look, in this old picture right here," South handed Japan the binder and sat down on his bed next to her. "He has normal eyes, just red and blue."

Japan looked at the picture as she already had countless times. It was one of the very few pictures of America where his eyes were seen. It was taken back when he was still a colony, very young, and depicted standing next to his father, Great Britain.

"South, this is a picture of a painting. They could've just paid whoever painted it to keep quiet and do it normally."

She handed her binder back to him and laid back on the bed.

South sighed and just looked through the pages, mostly just to keep him from arguing with her again. No matter what he says, she's dead set on this big conspiracy.

"Japan," he began hesitantly. "I lived with him before, he helped me recover during my and my brother's war. So, I would know if he had black eyes. Which he doesn't."

He closed the binder and tossed it onto his desk. He was hoping that his first-hand accounts would ease her, but it also wasn't the first time he tried that exact statement.

"Yeah, and have you ever actually seen his eyes?"

Her response to his hadn't changed.

"Of course I have," South answered this time, even if he was a little unsure. "I just don't really hyper analyze someone's eyes when I see them so I don't really remember."

Japan turned her head to look at him and saw his eyes dart quickly back and forth and his lips pull back.

He didn't remember. Not once.

"I'm gonna get us something to eat, I'm hungry," South stood and walked to his bedroom door. "I'll tell you when I'm done, then you can come and eat."

He left rather quickly, Japan noticed as she sat up. She hummed to herself, ears upright as she listened for his fading footsteps.

"I'm right and I know it," she said out loud to herself, trying to reassure herself if anything.

"I'm ignoring you," Japan stood up and walked over to South's desk. She opened the binder and started flopping through the pages again. On a couple of little laminated sleeves were sticky notes of reminders to finish a few pages of a Manga she was working on.

That note was from a few weeks ago and those pages were never done.

"If you're tryna get me to focus on something else it's not working."

Japan stopped on a page and started to read the notes she's taken. She couldn't keep the actual documents that ASEAN had loaned her for a bit—he was sticking his neck out just for letting her see those—but she took as many notes as she could, along with pictures.

It would be easier to simply ask America if he had black eyes or not, she was a trusted friend, and if he did he could trust that information to her.

"Or he could try to kill me. Black eyes aren't good if you don't recall Britain's thing with power and his corrupted use of magic."

It was true that Britain's case where he had pure black eyes was the most noticeable and recorded. Darkened eyes were linked to some type of powerful magic, a curse, or whichever. Usually resulting from the misuse of it.

Britain was the child of a unification and had inherently more power than normal countries. He had an easier link to the world's magic and had used it a lot during his first few centuries of existence. However, as they say, absolute power corrupts absolutely, and in Britain's case, it was true. His desire for control, his need for it, and thus actions to achieve it manifested his own personal curse that only he could be rid of.

"Exactly." Japan turned to a blank page and grabbed a pen from

South's utensil holder. "America is Britain's son, so in theory, it could be possible that he has some trace of Britain's power. Maybe not as much as his father's, but still some."

She began to write down her train of thought, sporadic and hard to link if you were anyone else.

"If America is messing with some dark dark stuff, he might not be the America I knew." She paused her writing and her tail twitched as a thought popped into her head. America had been secretive about his eyes for as long as anybody knew him. That's why no one thinks of it anymore, it's just the norm for him.

But if he's always been like that.

"Or maybe he never was the America I thought he was. And everything about him is a lie."

It's a dangerous game Japan is playing. Stringing together multiple seemingly random and unimportant things to weave a web to fit her narrative.

"This all makes sense, and you know it does. You just don't want me to cause that would be inconvenient for the story," she slammed the binder shut and put back her pen.

"And if that story ends up having America turn out to be this master villain that's been manipulating everyone then I want to have at least done something to stop it!"

There was no reasoning with her now. Japan knew what she saw. She was confident, a little unhinged, and was gonna do whatever it took to get concrete evidence.

**Anyways stalkings not good don't do that. It's not really taken seriously when a girl does it cause course not but like fr. I got plans for Japan to fix that don't worry so that's on me for using it as like a joke . I'm canceling myself lol**

**Also, I don't wanna hear shit about spelling mistakes we all know they slip by me easily**

**Till next time ladies, lads, and nonbinary comrades,**

**Ësgöge'ae'**

**~Galaxy**

# Soviet has Daddy Issues

**Narrator's POV**

It was spring on the island again, snowy landscapes now muddy terrains with fresh flora sprouting between puddles.

It was chilly, with a haze of mist and light fog that ran through the woods. It was eerie, snaking through the trees, and made it hard to see the ground where Russia walked.

He was sure-footed, despite the wet leaves and slippery ground.

It had been a while since he walked through this part of the woods. He knew the last time was when he and America stumbled across the abandoned palace. How something that big managed to stay hidden from the world- from *him*- didn't make much sense. His father had taken him everywhere in these woods. He knew them, he was trained to know them.

Perhaps his father didn't know?

Russia shook his head.

Alone he traveled, just with his thoughts as he would prefer with this. He didn't want to bring America back there, not with how he had reacted the first time. He still didn't have a clue why he suddenly went mad and attacked him.

And that's why he's there. To find out.

Now if only he had an easier time finding it.

It's been two hours and every time he's certain he knows where he's going, he starts to doubt himself and changes direction. It was starting to get frustrating for him.

It was like something was keeping him away.

And something was, unbeknownst to Russia. His duly undead Dad was following him around on his hunt, invisible to his eyes and ears. He guided his son away from the direction of the palace every time he started towards it. He was trying his best to convince him to turn around and to stay away from that place but unfortunately, his influence only reached so far.

Russia mumbled some curses under his breath that Soviet scolded him for.

He sharply turned in the direction of the palace once more.

Soviet turned him around.

Russia got angry.

Rinse and repeat.

Tired, Russia decided to sit down and take a break. He pulled his bag off his back and dug out some provisions, a water bottle, and some snacks.

He didn't think he'd be out here all day but he was fully prepared to make this an overnight trip if he needed to.

As he munched on some snacks, he thought about how he found the palace again. He had been running yes, a bit frazzled albeit, but he was still keeping track of where he was heading. Especially with his unexpected detour. He hadn't stumbled upon it on accident, it had felt more like he was being guided to it. But now he was being kept away. What changed?

His boot heel dug into the dirt underfoot as he thought.

It was an emergency, he was scared maybe it was the sense of panic that did it. He can't recreate that sense of urgency right now, so he can't test that out yet.

Russia sighed, looking at the protein bar he held. Theories swarmed his mind as he tried to find the most logical one. It could be that he's thinking too much into this and then is just psyching himself out. He didn't accept that one, he'd been trained better than that,

there was no way he'd be this disoriented this quickly. Perhaps then there's some kind of device or another that is designed to keep passerby's far away from the palace, and the reason it didn't work last time was because he was so distraught. He knew his father was working on something similar during the Cold War. But that wouldn't explain why he was directly guided to it last time.

He finished his quick snack, still very frustrated. A few chirps and rustling of leaves caught his attention and he glanced up skyward. A couple of birds flew through the branches, stopping on them for a second, or soaring right through and into the gaps between the trees. The leaves on the branches hadn't fully grown in yet, so they didn't cover the twisting shapes or the forgotten nests that had been left since the last spring. A few rays of light came down, shining through what little greenery there was. Its placement was lower than Russia had wanted, showing it was around three in the afternoon.

Despite himself, Russia took in a deep breath and just watched. He examined each tangle of vines, each line on the trees, scuffs in the ground, and the numerous little plants sprouting from beneath the blanket of dead leaves that was left from last fall. He saw marks from animals that had been here, places where it looked like deer must've slept.

Just relax. No progress can be made if he's stressed and caught up in his head.

America is a huge variable with this, he reminded himself. He had America in his arms, and when he got to the palace America went into some kind of trance. Maybe he only had access to the palace with him here.

For a moment he considered asking for him. Only a moment though, before he shook his head free of the thought. He can't do that. For one, America was busy today, and two he didn't tell him what he was doing.

Russia pulled out his phone and went onto his map's app instead. Maybe he can get a good idea of where the palace is by looking at the aerial view of the land. He scrolled from where he was located

but there wasn't anything shown in this spot of the woods, or anywhere else for that matter. Just treetops and that's it. There's no marker of anything, even the trail he takes in this area isn't fully marked.

God damn his fathers' secrets.

He put his phone in his pocket and decided to look through his father's journal. At this point, he'd reread it enough to know there wasn't anything that could help him, but he was getting a little desperate.

Soviet could tell this as well. Just a little more and he knew his son would give up. Call it a night and head home, and let the dead rest.

Metaphorically and literally, Soviet was getting tired.

Normally he would be proud of his son's determination and perseverance, but it was a little frustrating. There was a reason Russia didn't know certain things and he should've recognized that by now. He didn't raise a curious boy, he raised one to follow orders.

If he could just talk to him somehow, perhaps he could just tell him to turn around. Then he'd listen to him.

After the freak out over seeing his dead father that is.

How was he supposed to do that anyway? He wasn't given a handbook on how to function as a specter, he was left to his own devices. He knew he could influence Russia to a slight bit unless he was absolutely dead set on something. Clearly, otherwise, they wouldn't even be here. He could move some things sometimes, but that's never definite.

Soviet looked to the ground he barely could say he stood on. The leaves he stepped over didn't crunch or move, nor did he cast a shadow.

Maybe he could try to communicate in a different way.

Soviet dragged his foot across the ground.

A leaf twitched with movement.

He tried again. This time a small line in the mud appeared.

Russia snapped his head to the sound. He saw a small line in the ground, a boots heal wide and almost just as short.

"What the hell?" He said to himself, quickly putting his stuff away in his pack. He kept his eyes on the ground, waiting for something to happen as he put his bag back on.

"Okay, I can work with this," Soviet said as he dragged his foot to make his first line longer.

The mud moved with him.

Russia jumped to his feet.

Two more lines appeared to make an arrow.

Goosebumps trailed their way up Russia's arms as a chill ran down his spine.

There was no way that just happened.

Russia fumbled for his phone, and he snapped a picture of the arrow. He looked at his screen, trying to see if anything unusual appeared on it but there was nothing.

Soviet stomped on the arrow, trying to get rid of the two lines he didn't draw. The ground stayed unmoving, keeping the marker dug into place. He had watched the lines draw themselves, much like Russia. He hadn't done that, and he had no idea who did or why. He was trying to make an arrow, yes, but one pointing in the opposite direction.

This one was pointing right towards the palace.

"Okay," Russia spoke quietly, looking around him. He scanned the treetops, the forest bed, and between the trees looking for anything. He didn't know what, maybe the tribes or something else lost to the forests. He grew up hearing stories of evil witches, cryptids, and

other things belonging to the paranormal that lived in these woods. His belief in them dimmed the older he grew; however, it was never fully diminished.

"I can take a hint," he decided. Treading carefully, he started to walk in the direction the arrow pointed. Who was he to oppose against a force beyond himself.

"Nyet, nyet, nyet, son, wait," Soviet ran after him. He reached out a hand to grab his shoulder and felt himself get thrown back.

Soviet landed on the forest floor, his head light and his vision spotty. It took him a moment to come to his senses and look around. He held his hand out in front of him and saw his form flicker in and out.

What the hell was that?

He sat up and watched his son keep walking, unknowing to everything.

But there was something around him.

Something dark.

It surrounded him, faint to the eyes, distorting the air like heat waves.

It took Soviet a second to gather himself so he could stand and follow after his son and whatever was around him. It didn't give off any kind of feeling, no sense of uneasiness, not beyond the normal 'what the hell is that' amount.

Russia didn't feel anything, nothing but an average sense of nervousness. He didn't know how to process an arrow being drawn in the dirt in front of him by something he couldn't see. Strangely he wasn't put off by the aid in direction, just a little startled. He accepted the idea of the paranormal more easily than other countries, unlike America. It made sense to him, because if winged countries exist with magical gifts, and a certain level of magic existed overall, who's to say things like ghosts and spirits don't? They've all seen certain creatures, things such as Wendigos,

Chupacabras, and the like before and there have been historical accounts of them. Hell, Scotland's national animal is a unicorn, and he can summon that whenever. Why would spirits be weird?

As he walked, he noted that he didn't have the same sense of confusion that would make him turn around by now. He felt secure in his path this time. Strange, but that's a relief.

Soviet caught up to Russia, albeit with a slight limp. He can't let his son reach the palace. So, he reached out his hand to set on his shoulder and tried to get him to turn around.

It was weird, Russia thought, his pace slowing. Maybe he was being stupid, following this random arrow.

Soviet was thrown back again.

No, Russia shook his head. He's following this through. It's where he kept trying to go, whatever it was about this palace, it was trying to be found. Something else was trying to keep him away. He couldn't let whatever that was stop him now, not when he was so close.

Soviet rubbed his head and decided against influencing his son, not with whatever that was around him. His form flickered violently, and he had to lay on the ground for a minute or two to bring back his strength. At that rate, he'd be sent back to non-existence for a while, and he couldn't leave Russia out here by himself.

He's going to just have to see this through. Maybe once he sees it, he'll just leave it be.

It was a long shot. One he missed by a mile.

Once Russia saw the remnants of a stone path and familiar terrain he started to run to the abandoned palace.

Without the snow, the weathered outer walls and windows were more easily seen. They were built high, but time and nature had withered some spots down, exposing the interior rooms and building materials. Trees had grown between the fallen stones, along with vines providing some sort of replacement for the walls, but by the looks of it, it wasn't enough to prevent water damage.

Glass from broken windows littered the ground by them, along with pieces of metal that looked like it was railings to a balcony of some kind. Piles of bricks lying by fallen trees pointed to another reason for the destruction.

What still stood strong was the gate entrances. Kind of. There were three technical entrances, both with twin gates that were designed as intensely as the main one. There was a metal pole separating the gates, decorated with what looked like leaves, and held at the top a golden statue of a two-headed eagle for all three entrances. The two entrances on the sides were smaller, connected to the pillars that accented and supported the curved ceiling. A fallen tree blocked off one side gate and the other one had what looked like a chain wrapped around it to keep it shut.

Russia hadn't noticed that the first time. He walked over to it, seeing the rust marks left on the gate it held together and on the chain itself. It wasn't made from the same metal, and the lock looked a bit more modern than the palace. Someone had come here later and locked it off. Perhaps his father? Or someone else?

What looked like another chain had been wrapped around the bigger gates, the ones that Russia had kicked in when he was first here. It was on the ground, uncovered now with no snow, showing a clear cut through one of the chain links. Someone chained this place off, and someone else had broken in.

It couldn't have been him, he thought as he knelt to peer at the discarded chain, He would've noticed this the first time, but also it was cut. Not torn or pulled, a clean straight cut. And it happened before Russia arrived. Someone else had been here, but when?

He stood, dropping the chain, and looked ahead at the mangled iron gate, one side pushed open, exactly how he left it.

A slow wind built up behind him, urging him forward and making the broken gates creak. His sense of uneasiness grew, now knowing that he may not be the only one who knows about this palace. Russia stepped through the entrance carefully, his boot squishing the moss that grew on the stone. He made a mental note to step carefully, otherwise, he could slip.

The courtyard had stone walkways, Russia guessed, that squared around what was meant to be a garden. It was more like the forest that surrounded the palace with no one able to care for its appearance. Now, in the spring weather, newly sprouted plants getting thicker further in and growing up to the height of his knees. Trees had sprouted leaves and the vines that curled around had grown a green coat of moss and smaller plants.

His steps on the stone broke the stillness but were still muffled occasionally by the damp flora that grew from cracks and the moss that flourished.

Soviet followed silently and slowly, trying to keep his focus on the ground. He'd rather not attract the ghosts of his past. He could feel it around him, eyes staring from each window and doorway. Whether it was something or not was hard to tell, not that he wanted to look to make sure. Either way, he hated being back here.

Russia walked across the courtyard, eyeing anything that seemed noteworthy. Crumbled walls, pillars, statues, broken windows, vines growing everywhere they could along with trees breaking through the stone on the ground and stretching to the higher floors. Ruins, that's all these where. Nothing out of the ordinary, he guessed.

The front entrance was opened already and he didn't hesitate to walk in.

The scent of rain and moisture turned stale and stiff tainted with rotting wood and stone, almost similar to a cave. It was dark like one too, equally as empty and quiet. Russia's footsteps echoed around in the long hall, occasionally squeaking from the moister and making him wince every time. A buzzing of white noise was the only other accompanying sound.

Soviet didn't dare speak, unsure of what may hear him if he did.

Whatever had surrounded his son and cut his connection with him– albeit temporarily he could feel his connection reforming already– had all but disappeared. It left no trace or any sign of it being there. Not one he or Russia could sense.

Whatever it was did leave him on edge. It felt familiar, childhood familiar. Not in the way one remembers their favorite childhood meal or that specific smell of a park bench on field trips, no. It was the way rain felt after going to your first funeral when you realize what loss is. The dread, an ache in your stomach that pulls on your chest, all of that mixed in with blind fearful hope.

It was all too much.

"Bad, very bad," mutter was all Soviet could do. Apart from watching his only son climb the steps of his childhood home.

He only brought him here because of that emergency. He was never supposed to come back. There are old ghosts here he'd rather not disturb.

Russia now with more time on his hands, was strolling through, admiring the detailed engravings on the staircases. Massive windows on the wall gave him enough light to see the massive marble statues that were adorned everywhere, the checkered floor underneath the faded red carpet, and the withered golden designs on almost *everything.* And everything wasn't an understatement, it was everywhere. Some pieces, mostly the ones lower and in arms reach were broken off, probably by a vandal or just natural causes. The staircase was massive, Russia had to crank his neck skyward to see everything. When he did that, he caught sight of the ceiling and stood in awe at the painting that was there. Outlined by gold and giving the image of being held up by muscular statues, the ceiling was made into a massive canvas, adorning the image of what Russia assumed was biblical. Paintings in that style and on ceilings usually were.

Now being struck with the idea, Russia fumbled to pull out his phone and snapped a picture. He swiped to video mode and took a panorama shot of the staircase, turning slowly and not even paying attention to his screen. He was so caught in what he saw that he almost forgot to stop the video when he was done turning.

Russia walked up one of the side staircases, it didn't matter which one they both led to the same place. It was opened, the staircase mirroring each other to lead to the second floor. Parts of the carpet

were torn, wrinkled, or just misplaced. It was dirtied, his muddy and wet boots leaving prints in the fabric. He couldn't tell if anyone else had left tracks, though.

It was obvious this place had been vandalized at some point, torn apart, and left abandoned. It had to have been, even though it wasn't to the extent one would expect. Sure, there were some old and torn-apart books thrown around and even in piles, along with broken beams and glass from the windows, but it wasn't a lot. That's what made him uncertain about it, though, cause if this place had been vandalized a lot more damage would be seen, some statues would be missing, and their pieces wouldn't have been left behind. Much less the gold, the dull but still shining gold, how could anyone leave that?

There were a couple of sights like this, they weren't uncommon with the number of empires that have existed. But people like Britain and Spain turned theirs into museums to show off their accomplishments and the things they've stolen from their conquests. Or as they put it, to show off and preserve history.

This, though, was strange. It felt so familiar, and how massive it was it shouldn't have been hidden from him as long as it had been. Or from anyone for that matter.

Maybe that was tied to whatever was seemingly trying to keep him out. If it had disoriented him, an experienced tracker, so well then no doubt it would've done the same for everyone else. But then it had disappeared so suddenly, and it was like he knew the path there. As if he had gone this way a thousand times. What changed?

Something had drawn that arrow and as soon as it did that's when his sense of direction cleared up.

It couldn't be this palace that's keeping him away. How he felt in these hallowed halls, almost inviting and welcoming, like a mystery that didn't want to be one. It had to be something else that wanted him to keep out.

Russia's hand drifted to his pocket that held his father's journal. He would've known about this, there's no way he couldn't have. The

look of these ruins, the books it was all during his father's lifetime. But his journal didn't start that early. It started more when Russia had already existed. There wasn't anything on it.

Perhaps his father was the thing who didn't want him to know.

He wanted to dismiss such a thought, after all his father was dead and buried. If he were to come back from beyond the grave, it certainly wouldn't be to hide some ruins.

Russia stood at the top of the staircase, and he leaned against the marble rail. It hadn't been polished in decades by the feel of it, not that it mattered to Russia. A few drops of rain came in through the openings in the walls and windows, along with a breeze that whistled down to him. The sky turned gray and had dimmed the room a bit, but not enough to hinder Russia's view.

Wouldn't it?

Nonsense, his father would've told him about this place so that way he could keep it a secret, just like his important documents and his bunkers.

Unless it was to keep it away from *him*.

The long corridor that stood ahead of him, daunting and barren did little to ease his thoughts. It was so huge, filled to the brim with history and secrets. Had his father been the one to wreck the place? Is this just a former sight of a battle that even he had forgotten about? Or perhaps an old house of his that was invaded.

That would explain why he wouldn't want to talk about it.

An old house. No. This is a palace.

Consider the geography, he told himself as he walked away from the staircase through the next room. It was less grand than the staircase, just the marble gazebo-styled structure in the center of the room. He took some pictures and then moved on to the next room.

Think about this all. All of it, the décor, the architecture, the

location, it's all Russian. This wasn't just a random palace, this belonged to *his* family. Or family adjacent.

If it was his families, he had one obvious conclusion.

"Nyet," Soviet sensed Russia's train of thought, rushing up behind his son.

His father never talked much about his grandpa. It could be that this was their old home. It would make a lot of sense as to why he was never told about it. It was known Soviet didn't get along with his predecessor, he had controlled him under an iron fist and would treat him horribly. Their last encounter happened during the war. His father had been left with no choice but to overthrow his own father and be rid of his ruthless reign.

The tsar, that's what he had called him. Never father or papa or anything like that. He was never an actual father to Soviet, that's why he never spoke of him unless he was forced to. That's why he took extra care of his kids, adopted or otherwise. He made sure Russia could live and defend himself. Not only just survive as a small country with little to its name, no but to thrive instead and leave behind a legacy no one could ever forget.

That's how Russia understood it at least. He had that drive, that sense of national pride for a while. Then his father passed. Reality had truly hit him then. It turned a delusion kid into a pessimistic problematic drunk.

Actually. He's different now.

He's been sober more often. He's been outside more and more, talking again with countries and being in general more socially acceptable. He's been happy.

He actually found motivation. America.

Wait. If this is the tsar's old palace, then why did America go into that trance? What connection did he have with this place?

He stood in the center of the ballroom he had caught up to America in. He was too focused on him to fully take in any of the fine

details. The chandelier still hung from the ceiling, the floor still had some of its polish to it but with a clear layer of dust, and once again everything was decorated with statutes, paintings and gold.

Russia analyzed all he could, taking out his bag and setting it next to him on the floor as he sat down. He sent a message to Kaz to update him and let him know he was still alive and hadn't been kidnapped. He even added in the code word they chose to let him know he was actually safe, and he wasn't being held at gunpoint.

Or in last instances case, spearpoint.

He dug through and found his own personal journal. He figured with everything going on, having one of his own might help a lot. He was only a few pages in, noting down only stuff that was important. He wasn't going to keep a diary, no, it was just a field journal. So if anyone saw his doodle of America he would say it was because he was studying the enemy.

Not because he was in a secret gay relationship with him, no.

Russia did look at it for more than he'd like to admit before quickly flipping to a new page. He wrote down any markers he remembered, how the arrow appeared and the chains on the gates. He wrote the time the date and anything else that seemed important. He estimated how far from the path he was and wrote that down.

He wrote down his train of thought, letting it all spill out as soon as pen hit paper.

His questions;

Why did America have his trance? Does it have anything to do with this place? Why is it so hidden? What happened to have this place lost to history? Is there anything here that can help him and America? Why did America somehow know this layout? Why did he seemingly guide him on a tour? Why did he freak out in the courtyard?

His answers;

Not a clue. Most likely. The location and overgrown trees overhead helps. His father probably tried to bury it the best he could. He has no idea. Maybe he's connected to this place. Same answer. And another he has no idea.

Russia hates not knowing.

"I don't know isn't an answer," Soviet would tell him every time he used it. "Tell me where 'I don't know' lives so I can go ask him myself."

It was true Soviet didn't raise a curious boy, but he did raise one to find answers.

So in a roundabout way, Soviet screwed himself over with Russia and his pursuit for answers.

He watched his son as he wrote, occasionally glancing up and looking around him. He read what he wrote over his shoulder, raising his hand to introject his writings only for Russia to write what he was about to suggest.

It was calm, distance noises of the surrounding woods and little critters providing background ambiance. That was good. Complete silence is what would worry him the most.

Eventually he stood, keeping his journal and pen out and putting his bag on his back. He walked through each room, noting down anything he could. Soviet followed behind him, keeping his eyes peeled.

Words could not express how much he hated being here.

There wasn't anything that really caught his eye, though. Beyond the obvious enchantment of the palace that is.

Russia decided to follow the same path he took last time, sticking with some sense of familiarity first. After all, that was the path America had taken, so it had to important in some way. So, as he walked and stopped into each room, he traced out a map, laying out the rooms for future use. Also, in case he gets lost somehow. He made notes, briefly describing what he thought the rooms were

used for.

In the tapestry hall is where he noticed the most wear and tear.  It was a little darker in this hall, Russia had to turn on his flashlight to make sure he didn't miss any details. It was a long hallway with almost puncture like marks in the walls and scrapes across them. The polished floor was broken in a spot, a small impact crater that spiderwebbed out into dozens of cracks. It looked like something big or heavy had hit the floor hard. Whatever had done it however was no longer there.

He ran his fingers across the divots in the walls, feeling the corrosive edges. Bits of the wall crumbled at his touch and fell to the floor where amounts of dust had previously fallen. Those looked like sword marks, he realized. Someone had taken some kind of blade and just started slashing.

Russia looked down the hallway and looked at the tapestries and the spots where they where to hang. The same marks where around them, very evident on the few tapestries that still stood. Now that he was looking closer, the tears looked too clean. They where cut down, some being almost hacked to shreds or cut in half. Those ones didn't have their second halves anywhere in the hall.

He took note of this room especially. Clear sign of a fight maybe, or at the very least someone was very unhappy here. Maybe it was connected to why it's abandoned.

Soviet watched his son take note of the destruction he had caused. He traced the edge of a tapestry he had cut into with his sword. He didn't feel the fabric, the individual threads he knew were there. He remembered the day clearly. How could he forget? It was the day he freed himself from the shackles of a tyrannical rule and when he made one of his biggest mistakes.

Russia moved on and Soviet gladly followed.

He couldn't have been no more than Russia's age when it all happened.

Caught up on the past, that's what he was. It was strange. Being

dead only made him reflect. There was very little to look forward to, not unless he found a way to enhance his abilities. He didn't have a life anymore, to put it simply. He was left no choice but to think back and reconsider his past choices.

The one he focused on the most was Russia. He would go back and forth thinking he should've spent more time with him beyond the training and survival exercises to knowing he did what was best for him. After all he got himself and everyone else out relatively unharmed from the clutches of those tribes. He's prepared him well.

However on nights when he sees his son alone, making food for himself in their empty house he wishes he spent more time with him. Teaching him little things, the kinds of things he did with him when he was younger. Teaching him to dance, ballet as his own father had done with him, spend time with him reading, hunting or just doing whatever it was that Russia wanted to do. Russia loved to do things with his father, getting to go along with him on diplomatic missions, mostly to sight see in whatever country's territory Soviet had to go to. His siblings very rarely ever got the chance to go with their father on trips like those.

Russia was a very curious child, perhaps it's just his nature. He went along with him to political meetings sometimes, too, just because he wanted to know what his dad would do. He also just wanted to know why he was gone for hours on end.

It was at those meetings he had first met America, but the country paid him no mind. He was too busy rivaling his father to even notice his son.

Russia had been found of him. He had been very found of many countries, though. Such is the way with children. However, when he learned his father despised "that American scum" he learned to hate him the same way.

Outside his fathers influence, Russia seemed to have gravitated back to his curious nature. It was curiosity that drove him to help America, to seek out those tribes, and that brought him to this palace.

Curiosity killed the cat, Soviet thought to himself as he watched his son walk further into his past home.

But satisfaction brought it back. Something Soviet didn't understand.

When the walls turned blue, Russia started to get caught up in how intricately decorated this place used to be. There was broken furniture, but not enough to let him think it was a vandal, unlike other spots he had seen. The wood was chewed through like it was an animal who did it. The wall's coloring had faded, the original color still visible in square patches where paintings used to hang. There where a couple of paintings still in good condition, just scenes of flora. Even their color faded from the exposure to the sunlight.

The difference between the sunspots and the unaffected areas was jarring, only contributing to the length of time this place must have been left abandoned.

As Russia was examining the walls and paintings, Soviet heard something. Low and in the distance, too low for Russia to hear. He spun in the direction he thought it came from and strained to hear.

It echoed. It sounded like a humming. A buzzing of some kind, perhaps?

Soviet looked back to his son and then to where the sound was coming from.

Russia hadn't noticed it.

Whatever it was, it wouldn't notice Soviet. If there was something else here, he could find out then guide Russia away from it. Or guide him enough to it so that he notices it and gets the hell out of here.

"I'll be right back, son," he said as he started towards the low hum.

Russia didn't answer.

It wasn't too hard to tell where it was coming from. Soviet knew

these halls enough to know how sounds can reverberate in strange ways in certain places. In the rotund room, with its circular build it was hard to tell which hall the echoes were coming from to the normal person. Soviet turned right after standing in the room for a moment and listening to the humming.

The closer he got to it the more he was certain that the sound was a voice. Something about it rang familiar in his ears and stirred his stomach. If he could feel, he would have noticed the hair on his arms sticking up as they did on his neck. Something was wrong, he knew that for certain. He glanced behind him, the uneasy feeling making him imagine shadows and eyes on him.

He started to walk slower the closer he got, peering in any opened room before walking past it.

He peaked over corners before walking down hallways.

He refused to continue until he knew for certain that there was nothing there waiting to lunge out at him. Despite being a ghost, he was still worried about it.

He walked closer. The humming became more distinct. Right in this hallway, in one of these rooms. The dark oak doors, the ones that lead to the library he had spent a lot of time in as a youth. A curious child, much like Russia.

But that voice. The baritone, the gruffness, and the tune it sung, it sparked familiarity inside Soviet. Almost recognizable. It sounded like. . .

Soviet shook his head. No. Impossible.

There he stood, in front of the ajar door though, listening to the impossible. A tune he hadn't heard since childhood, a voice he blocked out of memory. He could hear the faint mumbles of lyrics in between hums.

Russian the voice spoke.

He reached for the handle before his fingertips passed through it. He didn't even notice right away, his eyes where transfixed on the

wood in front of him. Just past it he knew he would see the multileveled room filled to the brim with books on each level, everything built with the same dark oak. When he tore through the palace in a fit of rage and destruction he skipped over this room. In fact, he remembered locking it in place to make sure no one would get inside.

There it was though, door cracked open. All he had to do was walk right in.

"HmmmMMMmmmmmmm," the voice hummed.

The door being unlocked or not wouldn't have stopped him, he was a ghost after all but for a split second he seemed to have forgotten that.

No, he decided. He tore his hand away from the door, holding his wrist like it had burned him. He turned to go back to Russia.

The silence of the empty hallway greeted him. Soviet paused, mid-step. He noticed it immediately. The silence.

The humming it had stopped.

He turned to face the door just as it opened.

Out stepped a man, eye level with him peering down at a book in his hand. It was titled *A Terrible Vengeance*, the cover having dirt dried to it and discoloring the pages. He wore formal Russian attire; the kind Soviet hadn't seen in a while. It was scuffed and torn slightly on the shoulder, on the shirt right below the man's chin there was a dirty stain. The color was dark, almost brown and it circled two holes in the chest coat.

But the most noticeable thing about this man was his face. It was aged, lines under the eyes and at the corners of his mouth. He had deep bags and almost a sunken look to him, as if the man was a resurrected zombie. His hair, the black lines halfheartedly pushed back in a disheveled manor.

They didn't do much to cover the dripping bullet wound in his forehead.

Soviet stood still, frozen as he had been after he had taken the first shot that killed the man he saw clear as day in front of him.

His father, the Imperial Tsar of Russia.

He hadn't even noticed Soviet yet. He was too transfixed on the rotten pages in front of him. He stayed there paused in the doorway, holding open the door that Soviet could see through his hand. He mumbled the words he read as he shook his head and scrunched his eyes in thought.

"Nyet, nyet," he spoke and his words, as little as they where nearly sent Soviet down the hall.

He turned abruptly and the door creaked closed behind him.

It had been a few minutes before Soviet could find the strength to take a few steps back. He had stayed there frozen as a deer in headlights, just awaiting his doom. There was no way. There couldn't be a way. He was dead. He can't be here.

Soviet was dead too and he shouldn't have been there either.

He felt his entire form shift, flickering as he felt the urge to run. Run away as fast as he could and get Russia away from this man. He was lucky he hadn't been seen, astronomically lucky as he was standing a mere two feet away from the man.

"Russia," he mumbled.

He turned to run but the door opened once more.

"I could've sworn it was," Russian Empire rubbed his temple, his fingers grazing over his bullet wound. He furrowed his brows in thought as he stared at the book cover he had been holding. It was the same book but for some reason it interested him more than Soviet, who he walked right past.

Soviet stood still in fear of that changing, not that he could move anyways. He tried to make himself disappear, after all he did it whenever he didn't want to maybe this time it can work in his favor.

"No, it has to be in there!" The man exclaimed, halting suddenly. He spun on his heels and started to march back towards Soviet. His eyes still on the book. "I swear, it's like it's on the tip of my tongue."

Then he looked up.

He paused, meeting eyes he hadn't seen for the better half of a century. Golden piercing eyes he had last seen engulfed in rage, but yet shinning with moisture. He remembered the eyes of his killer, how could he not? They where the same as his son's.

His focus on holding his book evaporated as soon as he realized who he was staring at. It fell through his hand, slamming flat on the floor and ringing out as loud as a gunshot. The same noise that left silence between them for what they assumed would've been forever.

Russian Empire never heard the gunshot. You don't hear the one that kills you.

"You," he narrowed his eyes at Soviet.

# Ghost Retirement Home

**It's been like years and I'm scared ya'll**

**Narrator's POV**

Russia didn't know Soviet had left him, much less know that he was there at all. He kept taking his notes, using spare paper to get pencil traces of certain designs on the walls, posts, anything actually. The longer he stayed here looking at everything the more excited he became. He caught himself running from one thing to another, his caution leaving him gradually.

Of course he kept his head on a swivel, he wasn't without concern or cation, he was just excited to be able to explore this ruin.

The realization came to him that he was likely the only one who knew this still existed. He's sure someone like U.N. or hell even the E.U. knew this was here, however if they had, then this place would've been roped off. Perhaps even restored, with Russia's consent and knowledge. So that means he has a piece of his own family history here that he can look at without the eyes of other countries and their judging eyes of modernism.

Then he remembered those chains. He wasn't the only one who knew. But if someone had found this place, there is no way it would've still been a secret then. They would've reported it, or at least told someone else about it and the secret would have spread like that. Or perhaps whoever it was would've wanted this place to be a secret, too.

He looked out some windows when he found them to see the mass of trees and vines that grew around. There was light rain, a few drops but nothing Russia wouldn't mind walking through. His jacket would keep him warm if he had to.

Maybe he had been the one to break the chain? He did kick it in, maybe the chain was caught on the gate and the force of his kick was enough to snap it. He could be wrong about it being cut; it wasn't enough metal to properly tell. He guessed, at least. He really wanted to be the one who discovered this, and for the meantime, he wanted to keep it a secret.

He hadn't heard anyone yet, no actual signs of life. He should be safe here, but just in case he kept his eyes peeled. Person or no, there was still chance for wildlife to be here, and this place would make a good den for wolves, or even a bear.

Russia walked up to a window and wiped away the moisture on the inside and peered out. It would start to rain more; a downpour was in the books this time of year. Hell, maybe he could set up camp here. Stay the night. Certainly, just to avoid the weather, and not because the idea of staying the night here intrigued him even more. After all, he needs the field work practice. He's out of touch. Maybe he missed something.

He settled the thought in his mind and decided that it wouldn't hurt to stay here longer.

As he finished that thought he stepped into the last room that was familiar to him. The big blue corner room. America had run to the bed immediately in his trance state, jumping onto it and cuddling into the pillows. It looked comfortable enough.

Russia sat down his bag by the door and decided why not. He ran and then jumped onto the bed. It wasn't as soft as he imagined but granted this stuff had been sitting here for about a century. Either way, it was still comfortable. Maybe he'd fortify this room specifically and make this his sleeping place for the night. It would provide him the necessary cover, a vantage point with the windows along with a possible escape if he had to. He could easily keep himself warm, too.

I mean, it would only make sense to use a bedroom as a place to sleep. It would keep his stuff put together in case he needs to make

a quick escape, though.

Russia ignored the musty smell and focused on how soft the sheets where. Silk, obviously. He's never felt silk like this before.

Blue was a favorite color of his. Of course, if he was ever asked his answer would be red. His father hated the color blue.

America loves the color, especially if it's paired with red and white. The narcissistic little shit.

His narcissistic little shit.

After a second of stretching out his legs he decided to look around the room. There were a couple of papers loose and some books laying around, but it was all relatively put together. One curtain was torn in half letting in what little sunlight there was in.

Sundown would turn this place into a pitch-black labyrinth.

This place had evidence of being made, or at least renovated, to have electricity based around the light fixtures he spotted. He highly doubted it still worked, based on the look of everything. Even if it did, who knew if it would start a fire? After all the wiring wouldn't be up to any code. Plus, he had no idea where a light switch was even if he did want to try.

Russia looked around the room for something to use and spotted an old oil lap on the table. He shrugged and decided to see if it'll light. If not he has his own battery powered one plus a number of other things he could use.

He took off the glass and lit the wick with a match. For a second it wouldn't take but, in a minute, there was a steady flame that lit the room rather nicely. He swatted out the match flame and tossed it to the ground.

It made small noises, occasionally popping almost like it was dry wood.

It made the room have a certain eeriness to it.

He kept his flashlight on him and put the glass cover back over the lamp. He searched around the room while he still had daylight, digging in the drawers and under the bed. He found a few old books in Russian, all old stories that he's never read. The pages where yellowed and brittle and some hidden in the far back where in good condition.

He was checking under the desk when he noticed something in the wood. Underneath, carved into the wood was a small little arrow. He traced his fingers over it and remembered the arrow that had drawn itself right in front of his eyes. Could there be a connection?

He picked at the wood before tracing to where it was pointing. In the little sliver where the drawers connected to the top of the desk there was a small gap. He moved closer, peering into the connecting point. There was something in there.

He pulled out his switch blade and slipped it into the gap. He pressed up and started to slowly drag out whatever it was that was hiding in there. It slowly moved out and after a couple of tries he managed to get it dislodged enough to grab with his thumb. It was paper, perhaps a note hidden away.

Russia managed to pull it out and he quickly crawled out from under the desk and sat down at it. He held the paper to the lamp light and unfolded it.

He was right it looked to be a letter of some kind.

It was written in Russian and dated in March 1916.

'I'm worried about my friend,' it read. 'His fights with his father have grown more and more and he's starting to pick them with me. Yesterday I overheard him and some company in his study, talking about our problems and that they can be solved with this strange new plan. I couldn't get the details of this new plan, nor was I able to see who his companion was. It's been happening lately; I notice him sneaking around using the cover of the night to do most of it

in. Even today he seems to be missing."

Russia muttered the words, thinking to himself as he read. Who was the one writing this and who was this supposed to be about? The tone didn't read like his father's, so it left his imagination to wonder into different possibilities. A friend of his father's perhaps? A visiting country or empire?

'I've spoken with his father, but he holds no worry in his arrogant son. I told him of the nonsense he's been talking, but the Empire, as kind as he was, reminded me that squabbles between him and his son were best left out of my business. I can't seem to help myself; curiosity demands that I find some kind of answer. I pray to God they both find some sense of reason.

I also pray that I'm worried over nothing. This palace has been the closest to a home I've had in decades, I would hate to see it ruined. Perhaps the Empire should send him away abroad, to get his head back on straight. However, I would be lonely without his company and bored without his antics.'

The note wasn't signed. Russia looked at the paper, inspecting it inside and out, flipping it around and even holding it up to the light to see if there was a hidden message. Nothing. Just a normal page, small and book sized. Maybe it came from a journal.

Russia folded the note and took out his own journal and wrote down his thoughts and gist of what the note said. The Empire the writer had mentioned was referred to as title only, there once was a time where there where dozens of them so Russia couldn't rule any of them out. Still, the location of the note and where he was had to be an indicator. Was it his grandfather this note referred to?

Seeking answers, he started to look around for the book the page belonged to. Based on the side of the page, it had been ripped out. There were damaged books that littered the room, and there were ones in the halls, too. It'd take forever to check them all.

*BANG*

He jumped from his seat, raising his fists to the air, ready to attack an oncoming asailent. There was nothing in the room and within a second Russian realized it didn't come from inside the room. It came from somewhere else in the palace.

Old boards falling, or the building withering? The place is very old.

He didn't want to risk it so he put the note in his journal and grabbed his things. He held out his flash light and knife, holding them together so his weaponed hand was resting on his wrist.

Slowly he stalked out of the room, paying attention to the areas where the now dimmed light didn't reach. He noted down anything that looked out place and kept his body pointed to where he looked. The sound had echoed in the halls, he didn't know where it had actually came from. He followed his intuition and tried to find the source of the noise.

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"You," The Russian Empire walked towards Soviet briskly.

Eyes wide as they could go, he moved to hold his fists to his side and his feet together by the heel. It was a response in him that hadn't been triggered out in decades. Stand up straight, hold yourself still and look ahead, even if he yells. Especially if he yells.

As a solider should.

"You..." R.E stopped in front of his face and scanned him up and down. He held his hand to his chin as he seemed to analyze Soviets face. His eyes, once a deep and bright piercing shade of gold now where hollow, dusty and dimmed. They didn't have that sharp edge that always sent daggers through Soviet.

Suddenly hands where on his face and he was pulled nearly non-existent nose to non-existent nose. He was jerked around, being forced to look left. Then right. Then up. Then left. Then down. Then left again.
~~~~~~

Soviet's head and vision spun when he was finally let go. He had to take a few steps back to steady himself, not only from momentarily losing his balance but from the sheer confusion that just swept through him. His father had grabbed his face and thrown it about in such an odd manor, he had to have been mocking him some way.

R.E. tapped his chin again and hummed as he thought.

"You look familiar," he said.

Soviet blinked, taken aback.

"Oh, well, never mind that, I could use the assistance," R.E. bent down to pick up the book he had dropped. He scratched at his head staring at the cover, flipping the book over in his hands. "I need someone to help me find a book I'm looking for. I was reading it but for the life of me I can't remember where I put it."

Soviet looked at the book in his hands and furrowed his eyebrows. He pointed to it and asked, "Is that it?"

R.E. looked at him for a second, making a small noise to ask "what" before looking back down at his hands. His eyes widened and a smile spread across his lips, the crows feet by his eyes straining upwards.

"Yes!" He exclaimed. "This is the book! Oh. Thank you so much kind stranger, I have been looking for this for what felt like decades."

Soviet took a step back as his undead father walked past him and went down the hallway that he himself had tried to escape into.

"I must go find my boy, I was supposed to go to the marketplace, and I need him to help with the horses."

Soviet stood there and stared at him. If he had any breath, he would've been holding it. Before he could do anything, R.E. spun around again, almost jumping as he did so, exclaiming, "Oh! Actually, do you mind helping me with something? I hate to have to ask, but it's hard for me to focus nowadays. Do you mind fetching

the boy that's here? The one that's in the west wing?"

"Russia?" Soviet finally got a chance to speak with a clear thought. He narrowed his eyes, moving his hand to the gun holstered on his belt. "How did you know that he's in here?"

"Oh, I saw him. In a way. It's hard to explain," R.E. didn't notice Soviet's hand move to the gun holster on his belt. "I saw him in the woods, he was trying to find this place, I could tell. But there-there was this other, well I don't know, this thing around him. It was trying to keep him away. Well, I didn't want to have any of that, so I guided him back here. Afterall, I haven't had visitors since that one vagrant. They were hardly company though, very rude as welll. They had completely ignored me."

Soviet noted that he said someone else had been here and decided to press on that later. What mattered to him most was that he was the dark thing that had surrounded and guided Russia here. His father had been the thing, the reason he felt uneasy. But something was different about him. He seemed less aware, more absentminded.

He looked to the bullet wound in his head, with what looked like dark, almost black, blood dripping from it.  He didn't even seem to notice.

"Um. . ." Soviet hesitated. "*Sir*," the word made his stomach stirr, "what do you want me to do with the boy?"

"Oh, just bring him to me. I need to see him. He looked familiar."

"If you don't mind me asking, why does he look familiar?"

R.E. tapped his chin and started to hum the tune again. "His face, his eyes, that gold in them. They reminded me of someone. . ."

Soviet swallowed and hoped he didn't recognize his golden irises. Before he could get too lost in thought and have the chance of coming to his senses, Soviet walked up to him and set a hand on his back. He guided him down the hallway he had come from, trying to

keep his mind from thinking too much. Perhaps it's hard to think with that bullet wound of his. Thank God he at least knew to aim back then.

"Well, don't worry sir, I'll fetch the boy for you. Where do you want me to bring him to?" Soviet asked, so he knew to stay the hell away from that area and keep Russia away as well. He didn't care what this man wanted; he was not going to lay a hand on his son.

"Oh, um. Hmm, do you have the time?"

"Oh, no, Sir. But it is almost sundown."

"Pity. Well, never the mind, I shall go fetch the boy myself," R.E. slipped from Soviet's guiding hand as the walked into the rotund room and headed to where Russia was. "If its sundown, the marketplace should be closed."

Soviet kicked himself mentally. "Did I say sundown? I meant sunrise, sorry for my mistake sir. The marketplace is open early on the weekend, is it not?"

Soviet knew what market his father spoke of. It was similar to a farmers' market and countries traveling will sell or trade what they brought. R.E. would go every weekend.

"It's Thursday last I checked, we have two more days till the week's end." R.E. paused, turning around and giving Soviet a confused look. It was the most common expression of the man so far, and Soviet was praying the man didn't sharpen up.

However, the day of the week he gave made Soviet give the same expression right back. Its hardly possible that R.E. was in any state to keep track of the days, with that bullet wound seeming to have messed with his perception of everything around him. However, he was raised with a strict schedule that his father stuck to almost ritualistically.

Then again, he vaguely remembered his father mentioning going to the market place the day he had killed him. Its not like he was

paying attention, he obviously had a lot more on his mind at the time. Trying to kill your predecessor was a complicated task to plan, not to mention actually do. He almost backed out at one point, he remembered.

Could it be that his father is stuck in the past? On the day he died, most likely with how he's talking and acting. Was it a Thursday when he killed his father? He doesn't know. But none of that changes the fact that his father would only go to the market place on the weekends.

"Then why are you going, if I might ask, Sir?" Soviet asked, knowing that his father would stick to a strict schedule. A change in that would seem normal, or least not a big deal to others, but Soviet knew how his father was; he refused to deviate from pattern, even getting upset whenever he had to. Unless he specifically planned to do so himself.

"Oh, it's my son, of course," R.E. smiled, but then frowned and rubbed his forehead. Soviet's frown twitched and he held his breath. R.E. didn't piece it together yet cause he looked back at Soviet with the same look he's had. Soviet let go of his breath and relaxed only visibly.

"My son," R.E. continued, "he's, we'll I really don't like to speak of it, but he's been unhappy as of late. Nothing I seem to do has worked, and he's even declared he was going to revolt. He's been destroying my things, fighting with anyone he sees, and the poor маленький кролик (little rabbit) hasn't been safe from his violent outbursts."

Soviet's face burned, his heart racing the more his father talked. He held his fists still, but they refused, so he turned to holding them behind his back. маленький кролик, the name he had given America. He hadn't heard that nickname in a long time, and he absolutely wanted to go feral on the man in front of him. Shout at him, beat him, whatever he could do to hurt him, just anything at all.

Hold your expression, he reminded himself. He glanced at the bullet wounds R.E. had and reminded himself he got his revenge. What

happened was in the past now, he had won. There was no need to be angry over this now, its been decades. America doesn't even remember it, it was in another lifetime. That man is dead now, too. Everyone that mattered from that time was dead, the regime was over.

"I wanted to go to the market place to meet with some associates of mine, talk to them about taking my son."

"You were going to send him away?" Soviet gritted his teeth, forcing his scowl down.

"In a manor of speaking," R.E.'s eyebrows furrowed and he looked to Soviet with what could be similar to disdain. "Do not be mistaken, I want my son to stay with me, he's going to take the thrown after me, after all. Alas, he's unhappy, and I can't do a thing about it. He would talk about how blind I was, like I was an bug that needed to be stomped out. He's been fraternize with these unruly teachings, these ideas of a better form of ruling and when he had those ideas in his head, I knew there wasn't anything I could do."

Soviet forced silence.

"I wanted to find a way to give him that freedom he wanted."

Soviet's scoff couldn't be helped. He held his lips pin-straight, hoping that the man hadn't heard that.

Of course he did, it wasn't subtle. R.E. frown and narrowed his eyes, straightening out his stance and holding his book to his side. "Do not forget whose presence you are in. What's your name, boy? I don't recall you with my staff."

Ignoring the request, Soviet stood there with heat radiating off of him. The man would dare try to change the story to anyone he came across, wouldn't he? Of course he was going to send him away, send him far across the island just to be rid of the issue altogether. He never once tried to sit down with him and tried to hear his side, he would just scold him for 'creating nonsensical problems' and then punish him for bringing up such a thing. He

never listened to him, never took him seriously, never once tried to actually help. He always had time for everyone else, everyone but him.

"Forgive me, sir, " Soviet smiled twitched. "I must've lost myself. I just find it very hard to believe you could do such a thing to your own son."

R.E. held his sour expression, he was a man who could afford to be blunt with almost anyone. Never the less, he explained himself. "I was to send him to learn more of whatever it was he was focusing so heavily on. He was so sure it was what he wanted, and so I was to arrange for that. I wanted to barter with whoever I needed to so he can start his own territory with little damage to himself and others, we are in the mists of a war after all."

Soviet was a little surprised that his father had explain himself. He had been rude and obviously displeased him, he had no reason to, and he could very well have just told him to leave and never return. Technically, he would have every right to be rude back, and yet he held back. His father never did that for him before. Knowing that only stirred the unrest that grumbled in his chest.

"I was planning on simply handing over a portion of my land to him, so that way he can start his own empire and rule it how he saw fit. Alas, he wouldn't take such a 'hand out' from me. If my son couldn't be happy here, then I intended to find a place for him."

"Wouldn't simply arraigning that with another country be the same thing, then?"

"I didn't intend it to be easy for him. I wanted to ask, see if a deal or a treaty could be arraigned. Whoever the recipient was to be, I would offer wealth, aid in the war, land, supplies, anything they would've wanted within reason. Then they would take in my son so he would learn to rule on his own, Lord knows he wouldn't listen to me if I tried, then he would step into his new role after he completed whatever teachings they gave. Whether that was by taking over for the previous ruler, finding his own way through conquests, or just though diplomatic ways."

R.E. looked down at the book in front of him and rubbed his thumb across the indented title. A Terrible Vengeance. The name sounded almost ironic but he couldn't place why.

"Whatever he chooses. He would be his own independent nation, after all, and he'd feel much better if he worked for it."

Soviet blinked and stared at the man in front of him. His father. It almost sounded like he did want to help. No, don't fall for it. He's telling honey coated lies to sweeten his image to a stranger. Nothing he said was true. If his father had wanted to help him he would've actually done it. Before he declared revolution, too.

R.E. sniffed, brushed his hand across his eye lids. He was tearing up. "I apologize, I don't know what's come over me. Forgive me, a stranger doesn't need to hear the woes of an old man."

"It's quite all right, sir," Soviet feigned empathy. "You're in no state to great a guest, how about you gather yourself and I'll bring the boy to you."

"That sounds wonderful. I'll wait for you both at my throne then."

R.E. patted Soviet's shoulder before walking in the opposite direction of where Russia had been. Soviet exhaled a little as he watched the man fade into the darken halls. The lack of light didn't seem to bother him and now that he thought about it, he didn't seem to mind it either.

Maybe ghosts have better night vision?

Soviet shook his head and started to hurry back to where Russia had been. It wasn't too hard, all he had to do was fallow the pull of his journal. It guided him through the halls and back to where his son was.

Russia was still looking around for whatever made the noise, although he was less concerned now with no sign of anything. He was scanning the halls and thought about turning back. There was

no sign of anything and most likely was just an animal.

If it was an animal he'd rather get inside the room. Best to not disturb any critters especially in a dark rotting palace.

Also, because hearing a sound like that and going to check it out sounds like a horror movie move that he would've been yelled at for.

Russia turned around and started to back track to 'his room' for the night. Soviet followed in pursuit, peering behind his shoulder to make sure his air headed father wasn't following them. He clearly was not in the proper headspace, so he couldn't be fully certain what he might do to Russia when he found him. If it was anything like how he was treated by the man growing up he wanted to keep his son far away from him.

Which meant they had to leave now.

"Russia, we need to get out of here," Soviet warned, setting his hand on Russia's shoulder. He implemented the thought into his son's mind and watched his expressions to see how he was reacting to the thought of leaving. Russia frowned, his brows twitching downward. "Don't argue with me, it's not safe here in the dead of night. Who knows what's around?"

Like the ghost of your deceased grandfather for example.

Russia paused for a moment, considering what Soviet was warning. He agreed, not wanting to be mauled by a bear tonight. Perhaps at a later date when he's lived for a century at least. Although, he wasn't ready to leave the palace just yet.

Soviet tried to reason with Russia, but he can tell he was draining himself arguing with his stubborn bull of a son. It would be easier to convince him to stay in his room for the night and board up the door then leave altogether. Soviet needed the peace to process what he had just experienced anyways. Staying put at least would keep them both away from R.E.

In the blue bedroom, Russia set down his bag and secured the entrances to the room. He put a chair against the door handles and gently placed a vase on the edge of the chair's seat. If anyone tried the door or tried to sneak in, the vase would fall off the chair and he'd be awaken. He made sure the curtains where closed and the windows where covered in the areas where the curtains were ripped. He wanted to make sure that a passerby didn't see the light from his lantern coming out the window. Can never be too safe.

Soviet poked his head through the door occasionally to make sure there was no sign of his dually undead dad. So far they were in the clear.

Russia brought his bag over to the bed where he sat down. He rubbed his eyes, dragging his hand down to cover his yawn. It wasn't too late, but his hours of walking and traversing a wet and trickery terrain had worn him out. He needed to sleep a little, even if its just a small nap.

Besides, he's always wanted to sleep on a silk lined bed.

Russia flopped back to lay down and stare up at the torn canopy above the bed. The fabric had a shine to it that was caught in the lamp's light. Small jewels lined the hanging sides; star patterns were in the corners, lines of beads creating the motifs. A few beads where missing with thread hanging from the breaks, and a few holes were in the fabric, but Russia admired the craftsmen ship.

A few things in the room did have a slight star design hidden into it, now that he thought about it. The blankets and pillows on the bed had some stitching in similar designs. On the bed post that held the canopy, Russia noticed there were carvings done by a small blade. A handful of stars, a few done in confident, controlled strokes and others where shaky and jagged. Russia moved over to the pillars to drag his fingertips across them, feel the now soften edges.

Whoever lived here liked stars.

America likes stars. He doodles them sometimes in his notebooks or

just whenever he has a pen and something he can pretend is a canvas.

Russia looked at the carvings and remembered how America seemed to relax in this room. He jumped onto the bed and sprawled about as if this room was familiar to him. He walked directly to it, knowing right where it was.

Could there be a connection? He clearly had a tie to this place. Did this room use to be his?

Russia filed the thought away and tried to dismiss it. Other countries liked stars. Someone else could've carved those, it didn't necessarily mean America. Plus, this was Russian land, a Russian Palace. Why would America have been here?

With how America acted last time though, he couldn't ignore the idea. Clearly there was a lot here he didn't know.

Soviet watched his son peer at the carvings. He hadn't expected him to take up shelter in this room, but of course why would he expect to get any kind of luck. At least his father was waiting in the throne room. He'll be there long after they leave, the crazy old coon.

It was strange seeing his father like that. All ditzy and absentminded while somehow remaining partially aware of his surroundings.

Soviet remembered the well known respected and even feared man his father was. Strong willed determined and intelligent. An empire to behold.

Now he was near close to being sent to a retirement home.

Soviet wondered if there was a retirement home for ghosts.

Could he leave his father there with his ghost dementia?

A retirement home for the undead sounds like it could make a profit. He should make one. No, if he did he couldn't send his father

there. Perhaps he can find a ghost to be partners with that way he can have the financial gain but none of the caretaking.

Who else are ghosts here?

Soviet furrowed his brows. He was used to letting his mind wander now in his ghostly state, but this one brought an interesting observation.

He hadn't seen any other ghosts until now.

Could ghosts see each other? Well, yeah obviously he could see his father. But with what he looked like in the woods, it didn't look like a figure, it was just smoke. Barely even visible at that.

Was it because they where far from this palace? Is he tied to it as he's tied to his journal?

Does he look like that to others whenever he's too far away from his anchor?

There has been countless empire's, tribes, countries even that have died. Why hasn't he seen one?

Perhaps Russia just doesn't get around enough for him to spot any? Maybe there isn't any other than him and his father. Unlikely but not out of the question.

Maybe he can only see the ones he was related to?

Soviet sat down silently in the chair by the desk. He rested his chin on his hand and stared at the floor. There was a lot he didn't know. Why was he able to walk through walls but not sink through a floor?

Nothing made a lot of sense. Theoretically he shouldn't even exist. But he did. What is he supposed to do with that?

It's not like he can talk to anyone about this.

A creak in the floor made Soviet rise to his feet. He heard the trees rustle and saw a few papers flutter by the window. There was an opening where the glass had broken.

Wind

Soviet sighed.

He looked over to Russia and noticed his closed eyes and steadied breathing. He had fallen asleep, his hand outstretched to the little carvings he admired.

Even asleep his son is reaching for the stars.

Soviet smiled and drifted over to the edge of the bed. He used what little energy he still had left and lifted the blanket to pull it over his son. The light fabric settled gently across his body, barely noticed by his sleeping son.

When was the last time he tucked in his son?

He used to be so small. Clinging to his side or his coat, just scared to be on his own. So terrified of everything his father didn't directly introduce him to.

He couldn't imagine how his death affected Russia.

Soviet brushed his hand across Russia's forehead, brushing just a few strands out of his face. He was still sleeping with his ushanka on, something he did often. Soviet only shook his head and knew not to try. Russia would wake up eventually just to put it back on and fall back asleep.

The ushanka looked familiar.

His vision darkened and he stumbled back. Soviet held his head and slowly sank to the floor. He shut his eyes tight and waited for the world to stop spinning.

He was tired. Weakened. He needed to rest.

"Nyet," he muttered to himself.

If he falls asleep now he won't know when he'll wake up next. He can't leave his son here by himself with the ghost of his granddad on the loose.

If small movements like the ones he did made him feel like this he is very low on energy. He shouldn't move for a bit. So, Soviet stayed put and tried to relax where he sat, back pressed to the bed.

The waiting part of regaining strength is what killed him the most. He was waiting all the time; a man can only think the same thoughts so much.

He wished there was a way to get his strength back faster.

**Don't yell at me if the grammar is terrible, I just did a basic spell check**